

DRIVING PROACTIVITY IN ORGANIZATIONS:  
A COMPARISON OF APPROACHES TO INCREASE IMPROVEMENT-ORIENTED VOICE

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## **ABSTRACT**

Driving proactivity in organizations:

A comparison of approaches to increase improvement-oriented voice

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Leaders rely on other organizational members to speak up with ideas for improvement, or to alert them to relevant information they may not otherwise see. Various factors predict whether or not individuals speak up with ideas for improvement, including personality (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001), beliefs about voice (Detert & Edmondson, 2011), and contextual factors like leadership and climate (Detert & Burris, 2007; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012; 2008). Despite myriad studies on the antecedents of speaking up, a critical question related to voice behavior in organizations remains largely unanswered – namely, whether and through which processes voice can be sustainably increased. Assessing the levers and process for change will allow for a more precise comparison of the drivers (i.e., beliefs, contextual effects) of voice behavior. Exploring whether and how voice can be increased also has important implications for innovation and improvement in organizations. To address this question, I conducted a field experiment in an Indian IT consulting company whereby I led interventions designed to target three antecedents to voice: ability (i.e., issue selling skills), beliefs about voice, and leader behaviors. Preliminary results suggest that targeting employees' ability to speak up creates significant change in in employee- and manager-rated voice. Additionally, these findings suggest that having the ability to speak up helps employees feel that it is more worthwhile and safer to do so. In this dissertation, I examine my theory of change in voice, describe the field experiment, and offer my

findings. Finally, I draw conclusions and implications for driving improvement and innovation in organizations through employee voice.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Elizabeth J. McClean grew up in Fayetteville, NY, where she graduated from Fayetteville-Manlius High School in 2001. After high school, she attended Cornell University in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations. It was here that she conducted her first research project and realized her passion for the research process. After graduating in 2005, Elizabeth worked at Mercer Consulting in Boston, MA before returning to Cornell University for her Ph.D. As a Ph.D. student she was blessed to work with several great mentors including Christopher J. Collins, James R. Detert, and Ethan R. Burris. Her research focuses on employee voice, strategic HR management, and leadership. Elizabeth will be moving to Tucson, Arizona in August 2014 to continue her research and to begin her position as Assistant Professor at the Eller College of Management at The University of Arizona.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, Stella, and Inish.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Chapter I

Introduction	1
What is Employee Voice?	3
Literature Review	5
Purpose of Study	10

### Chapter II

Theory of Change	12
Methods	32
Results	41

### Chapter III

Overall Discussion	55
Theoretical Implications	59
Future Directions	60
Limitations	61
Conclusion	63
<b>References</b>	<b>64</b>

### Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Items	70
Appendix B: Employee Ability Intervention Details	73
Appendix C: Employee Beliefs Intervention Details	76
Appendix D: Leader Behavior Intervention Details	80

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Organizational decision makers, those with power, are responsible for making choices that affect the organization and ultimately how it behaves. Decision makers are intentionally rational, but they are naturally constrained by limited cognitive ability and incomplete information resulting in less than completely rational actions (March, 1994). They simply do not have the capacity to attend to all relevant stimuli in their environments, recall all pertinent information, comprehend and connect different types of information, and communicate across contexts in a completely accurate way (March, 1994). Given this limitation, decision makers must rely on other actors within the organization to collect and process which information is relevant. For example, a mid-level manager may look up to a more senior-level manager to understand the external environment in which the organization competes. Conversely, a mid-level manager may look to his or her subordinates to gather information about the functioning of the shop floor. Often though, managers do not rely on their subordinates as information sources and employees fear speaking up with information, like ideas for work-improvements or concerns about existing or impending practices (Detert & Trevino, 2009; Detert & Edmondson, 2011), resulting in bottlenecks of pertinent information. Examples of managers' limited information and the consequences of such are numerous in the popular press, like the infamous BP oil spill in the Gulf Coast. In a New York Times article (7/21/2010) by Ian Urbina, he writes that workers were concerned about safety, but feared speaking up with information about mistakes or problems. Many of the equipment components were deemed in "bad" or "poor" condition. Had employees raised their concerns about safety and provided junior and senior managers with information about poor equipment, could the disaster have been avoided? No one can answer this

question with certainty, but if managers at multiple levels had been more aware of safety concerns, perhaps the disaster would not have been as far-reaching.

Examples of major disasters, like the BP oil crisis, are rampant in popular press, but less drastic events (that often don't become major news stories) occur more frequently on smaller scale every day in organizations. For example, as many as 98,000 preventable deaths occur in hospitals each year because of medical errors. Tucker and Edmondson's (2006) work on front-line staff as a source of error detection and problem-solving shows the importance of speaking up about problems to managers so that they can act to prevent mistakes. Together, these examples, and myriad others not mentioned, highlight the importance of employees observing issues on the ground floor and speaking up so that organizations can act "more rationally", detect errors earlier, innovate, and better adapt to their rapidly changing environments.

The importance of speaking up about work-related problems, or employee voice, has become apparent because of these newsworthy events. But researchers have been interested in this topic for many years and scholars have made strides to understand the antecedents and consequences of this behavior within organizations. Voice is "the discretionary provision of information intended to improve organizational functioning to someone inside an organization with the perceived authority to act, even though such information may challenge and upset the status quo of the organization and its power holders" (Detert & Burris, 2007: 869). Research has focused on the antecedents of this work behavior, specifically individual, leader, and climate predictors. For example, researchers have noted the impact of various personality traits, like conscientiousness, as a predictor of whether employees speak up (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001). Additionally, leader behaviors like openness have significantly predicted whether employees raise work-related issues to their bosses (Detert & Burris, 2007). As the field of voice research

reaches its adolescence, what remains unclear, but practically relevant as highlighted by the examples provided here and theoretically relevant for scholars, is how and why voice behavior changes. If voice behavior has important consequences on organizational outcomes, like those described in the BP oil crisis example, then understanding how to induce employees to speak up is critically important. Assessing the mechanisms through which voice changes would provide a more nuanced view of the antecedents and consequences of voice behavior. Practically, examining changes in voice behavior will provide practitioners with strategies to encourage voice.

To this end, in what follows, I describe voice as conceptualized in the Organizational Behavior field. Next, I review the current research on antecedents and outcomes of voice. Following this review, I describe a series of interventions designed to induce changes in voice behavior and affect important performance outcomes. In doing so, I answer the following research questions: *How can voice be increased and through which mechanisms do changes in voice occur?*

### **What is Employee Voice?**

Voice a challenging behavior because it emphasizes change, can be risky to engage in, and affects the status quo as enacted by superiors. It is considered an organizational citizenship behavior, which means that its purpose is to affect the overall functioning of the *organization* (Organ, 1988), not a particular individual. This definition of voice and in the broader Organizational Behavior field is different from the voice concept in the Industrial Relations field. Voice, as defined by scholars in the latter field, refers to formal mechanisms and rights guaranteed by unions as they provide an opportunity for voice through grievance procedures, participation in decision-making, seniority-based layoffs, seniority-based pay, and teams (Batt et.

al., 2002; Delery et al., 2000; Freeman & Medoff, 1984). Scholars in the Industrial Relations field do not directly measure voice as a behavior, like those in OB, but rather assume that the opportunity for voice exists through unions or other formal mechanisms. Scholars in the OB field do not make the assumption that having formalized systems is highly correlated with voice. In fact, some OB scholars have suggested that formalized systems, such as union participation programs, symbolize an “us-versus-them” mentality and may even represent a more antagonistic environment in which discretionary, non-antagonistic voice is less present (Detert & Trevino, 2010). To emphasize this point, Detert and Trevino (2010) asked the question, “Why do organizations need formalized systems, if it is not inherently unsafe to speak up without such systems or practices?” (264).

Employee voice is also different from knowledge sharing behavior, a broader construct often used in management research to explain firm competitive advantage (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Organizational knowledge refers to the validated understanding between a firm and its environment and is often held by organizational members in the form of explicit knowledge (that which is easily codified and translated) and tacit knowledge (which refers to personal know-how) (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Knowledge sharing refers to the combination and exchange of tacit and explicit knowledge between employees (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). While the content of voice is in fact knowledge, these two constructs differ based on two characteristics. First, the motivation for voice is to challenge the status quo and promote change for the organization. The motivation for knowledge sharing may simply be to combine ideas and be more creative; employees engaging in knowledge sharing do not necessarily set out to challenge existing work processes for the betterment of the organization. And second, the consequences of voice likely differ because it is a much riskier behavior than knowledge sharing. While both knowledge

sharing and voice may benefit the organization, the risk of speaking up falls on the individual engaging in such challenging behavior. For example, Burris (2012) found that employees who engage in more challenging forms of voice are viewed as worse performers by their managers and their ideas are endorsed less than those who engage in supportive forms of voice. To reiterate, in the remainder of this proposal, I refer to employee voice in the way OB scholars define it. Next, I review the current literature on the antecedents and outcomes of improvement-oriented voice.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The field of voice evolved in two distinct streams: one body of research that has focused on individual-level antecedents and another on contextual antecedents to speaking up.

### *Individual-level Antecedents*

Early scholars focused more strongly on explaining the individual differences that affect the decision to engage in voice behavior. For example, LePine and VanDyne (2001) argued and found that employees who are more conscientious and extroverted are more likely to voice because those who are more conscientious are more likely to engage in conversations about improvement and those who are more extroverted will feel more comfortable speaking up. They also found a negative relationship between neuroticism and agreeableness and voice suggesting that employees who are high on neuroticism may get more nervous about speaking up and those who are more agreeable may be less likely to challenge the status quo. In addition to these dispositional characteristics, employees may speak up because they are more positive about their job and organization (Rusbult et al., 1998; Withey & Cooper, 1989). More recently, scholars have found similar and more nuanced results, such as that when employees are more satisfied

with their jobs, they are more likely to speak up and when they are more detached they are less likely to speak up (Burriss et al., 2008; Detert & Burriss, 2007).

Other individual-level characteristics like tenure and work status also affect voice behavior. For example, less tenured employees are less likely to speak up because they have less credibility and feel that speaking up is more risky (Burriss et al., 2008; Detert & Burriss, 2007; Milliken et al., 2003; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008b). Longer tenured employees may speak up more because they are more invested in their organization (Rusbult et al., 1998). Employees who are part-time are less likely to speak up for similar reasons. Part-timers are not as invested in the organization, have lower social status, and may view their job in more economic- rather than social-exchange terms (Stamper & Van Dyne, 2001; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008).

In addition to individual differences like those just noted, the issue selling literature provides insight into how challenging behaviors, like voice, are highly dependent on skill or experience with speaking up with ideas that may challenge the status quo. For example, a study on the effectiveness of issue selling over time suggests that issue selling requires building a capacity and the skill to persuade higher ups of the importance of a particular topic since there is no “magic formula” for doing so (Howard-Greenville, 2007). Further, the same study suggested that issue selling over time depends on reflection of and learning from earlier successful and failed interactions of issue selling. This line of research can be applied to speaking up; it suggests that engaging in voice over time may be a function of reflection on prior experiences and learning skills to enhance the capability of speaking up effectively. Thus, voice may also be a “can-do” behavior; this implies that it is not simply a function of predispositions or characteristics of the job, but is a learnable skill.

In contrast to the views that voice is a function of individual differences or is a learnable skill, recently scholars have uncovered that this behavior may be a function of habit based on beliefs, or implicit voice theories (IVTs), that affect whether individuals speak up (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Individuals develop, over the course of their lives, beliefs about whether and when voice is appropriate. Employees bring these beliefs with them when they arrive to an organization. Individuals who unconsciously hold strong beliefs may be locked in a self-protective mode of behavior; they fear negative consequences or believe that voice is inappropriate in particular situations. Scholars have found that these beliefs are resistant to context, that is, even in the presence of an open leader or a voice-positive environment, individuals who hold strong beliefs about voice are unlikely to speak up because these beliefs are habituated and unconscious and affect individuals' perceptions of whether it is safe to speak up (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Thus, whether individuals engage in voice may also be a function of whether they hold deeply engrained and unconscious belief structures.

#### *Contextual Antecedents*

Employees also “read the wind” to assess whether the work context is favorable to engage in a risky behavior, like voice (Dutton, Ashford, O’Neill, Hayes, & Wierba, 1997; Dutton et al., 2002). Scholars have identified that leaders are a critical aspect of context that affects whether employees speak up and have focused on two aspects as predictors of voice: the nature of the leader-follower relationship and leader characteristics. For example, Milliken et al. (2003) found that employees were less likely to speak up when their supervisor was less supportive and when the relationship with the supervisor was seen as less favorable. Also, leader-member exchange, which measures the quality of the relationship between a leader and his or her subordinate, affects voice behavior such that when leader-member exchange is higher,



employees are more likely to speak up and when it is lower, employees are less likely to speak up (because they are more detached) (Burris et al., 2008).

Leader characteristics also affect employee voice behavior. When a leader is more open, or approachable, listens to employees, shows interest in them, and gives fair consideration to their ideas, employees are more likely to speak up because they will feel that it is safer for them to voice (Detert & Burris, 2007). Also, when a leader is more transformational, employees will be more likely to speak up (Detert & Burris, 2007) because transformational leaders motivate employees to think about the collective organization and encourage innovative thinking; this characteristic encourages employees to be change-oriented and think about the impact of raising improvement-oriented ideas to benefit the collective. Other leader behaviors can easily discourage voice. For example, when employees view their leader as more abusive, they are less likely to speak up (Burris et al., 2008). Thus, leader characteristics can have both a positive and negative impact on voice behavior.

### *Mechanisms for Voice*

The choice to voice is affected by each of these antecedents resulting in an “expectancy like calculus” driven by the motivation to create change (Detert & Trevino, 2010; Milliken et al., 2003). Although the exact process is difficult to observe, scholars have uncovered evidence that feelings of safety, futility, and efficacy affect the decision calculus of speaking up. For example, Milliken’s (2003) qualitative study shows that employees cite various reasons for not speaking up like fear of negative consequences or the belief that speaking up wouldn’t make a difference. Similarly, Detert and Trevino (2010) note many instances where employees did not speak up because they felt unsafe or didn’t think it worthwhile (i.e., futile), despite the desire to create constructive change.

### *Outcomes of Voice*

This field of research rests on the premise that voice is beneficial to the work group or organization, as noted at the beginning of this paper, and that a central motivation for engaging in voice behavior is to benefit this larger collective. For example, voice can improve managers' decision making by providing information that highlights errors which may lead to improved efficiency and overall effectiveness (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Voice may also provide expressive benefits, that is, that employees will feel a sense of justice or satisfaction having been able to express themselves regardless of whether their ideas are used to make changes (Greenerger & Strasser, 1986). Although scholars have theorized that voice affects collective outcomes, compared to the research on antecedents to individual voice behavior, relatively fewer studies provide empirical support linking voice to collective outcomes. Edmondson (2003) is an exception. She found that new practices within interdisciplinary action teams in a hospital were more likely to be successfully implemented when employees spoke up. More recently, McClean, Burris, and Detert (2013) found that voice was negatively related to collective turnover when managers had the ability and motivation to act upon employee suggestions. Their results show that the relationship between voice and outcomes may not be direct, but rather that in order for voice to affect turnover, managers need the ability and motivation to respond to employee suggestions. Recently, Detert, Burris, Harrison, and Martin (2013) examined how different voice targets and flows affect unit-level performance. Their results suggest that voice flows to the leader, regardless of whether the voice is from the leader's own subordinates, positively affects unit-level performance and voice flows to coworkers, who do not have the power to act, negatively affects unit-level performance.

As discussed throughout, voice is a risky behavior because the target is often the supervisor with the power to affect work-related outcomes for an individual. Therefore, although the benefits of speaking up, like learning or changes that improve the work environment, may affect the broader work group or organization, the consequences, both positive and negative, of voice may also affect the individual who speaks up. Voice may have positive consequences for the speaker because he or she feels better having expressed him or herself (Greenberger & Strasser, 1986) or various performance benefits may accrue to the individual (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Here, too, few empirical studies explore the individual-level consequences of voice and with this limited work, the results are mixed showing that voice may have a positive benefit to individual performance (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998) or negative for work-related outcomes like promotions and salary increases (Siebert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001) or performance (Burris, 2012). More recent work by Burris, Detert, and Romney (2013) suggests that voice may have both positive and negative effects, but that the outcome depends on whether the employee and manager agree on the quantity of the voice. They found that when the employee and his or her manager agree that the employee is engaging in significant voice then the outcome will be positive, but negative outcomes will occur when employees overestimate their voice. Overall, the empirical support for the consequences of voice at the collective and individual levels is scant, but the findings suggest that the relationship may not be straightforward.

### **PURPOSE OF STUDY**

The preceding literature review shows that the voice field has reached adolescence and that various tensions regarding what predicts voice have emerged. First, one line of research suggests that voice is a result of leader behaviors (i.e., context), but recently scholars have found that prior-held beliefs inhibit people from speaking up even in the presence of an open leader.

Thus, the first tension to emerge is whether voice is a habituated action based on one's prior held beliefs about speaking up (and thus, resistant to context) or whether it is driven by context. Second, early scholars suggested that voice is a function of individual differences and, more recently, habituated beliefs, but the issue selling literature provides evidence that raising risky issues is a learnable skill. Thus, the second tension to emerge is whether voice is learnable (i.e., a "can-do" behavior) or whether it is primarily a function of individual differences like personality or beliefs about speaking up. These tensions raise an important theoretical and practical question- if an organization wants to increase voice, what is the best method for doing so: targeting leader behaviors, beliefs about voice, or an individual's ability? Assessing this question would elucidate the strength of these various factors and tease apart the tensions between them. Thus, my primary research question is how organizations can change voice behavior by targeting employees' ability, beliefs, or leader behavior. To further evaluate and understand the reasons why voice changes, I also explore the mechanisms through which change might occur. To date, scholars have theorized several mechanisms- safety, futility, and efficacy- but have yet to systematically assess them. In what follows, I develop a theory of change in voice behavior, eliciting the processes through which it might occur. I focus on three potentially changeable antecedents: leader behaviors, employee beliefs, and employee ability to speak up. In doing so, I also examine a broader question about change; that is, whether change should occur from a bottom-up (employee-targeted) or top-down (leader-targeted) approach. In effect, I develop a theory of individual behavior change and explore my hypotheses through a field experiment.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THEORY OF CHANGE**

Organizational learning has been defined myriad ways including, “encoding and modifying routines, acquiring knowledge useful to the organization, increasing the organizational capacity to take productive action, interpretation and sense-making, developing knowledge about action-outcome relationships, and detection and correction of error” (Edmondson & Moingeon, 1996; 18). Regardless of how learning is defined, voice is a building block of this process. Excluding external acquisition of knowledge, employees are the major source of knowledge and information that can improve productive capacity and error reduction within organizations. Without their voice, pertinent information is wasted and defensive organizational routines persist (Argyris & Schon, 1974). To remain viable in an uncertain environment, organizations need to draw upon their most valuable asset, employees, to continue to adapt and change to remain competitive (Edmondson & Moingeon, 1999).

Unfortunately, leveraging employee ideas for improvement is not an easy task given that employees enter into organizations with implicit beliefs about speaking up and managers’ naturally feel threatened when employees raise ideas for improvement (Burris, 2012; Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Given the strong pressure from both individual differences and leader behaviors to not speak up, employees often remain silent creating lost opportunities to learn. Therefore, understanding how to change employees’ likelihood to speak up is critical to organizational adaptation, efficiency, and overall competitiveness.

But the question of how to create changes in voice behavior has yet to be answered. Broadly, behavioral change has been the subject of many studies across diverse fields as clinical psychology, sociology, economics, and political science. Scholars across these diverse fields

have questioned the appropriate process, and therefore target, of change. For example, behavioral psychologists have argued that behavior is a function of external conditioning (Skinner, 1991), which suggests that to create behavior change, changes to external stimuli must exist.

Conversely, cognitive psychologists have argued that behavior is a function of internal schemas and beliefs, and therefore these cognitive structures must be targeted to create change (Fiske & Taylor, 1990). Similarly, organizational behavior and development scholars have argued about the appropriate level to target change interventions, whether it is the individual, group, or system (Poole & Van de Ven, 2004).

In organizations, the context in which voice occurs, at least two targets for change exist: leaders and employees. The focus on leaders as change agents is a top-down approach to change. Years of leadership scholarship suggests that leader behavior affects employee attitudes and subsequent behavior (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). Further, change scholars are nearly unanimous in their advocacy for strong leader support for creating change in organizations (Beer & Nohria, 2000). Managers can promote behavioral change in employees via their own behavior toward employees and toward change more broadly by how they decide to devote resources. This perspective aligns closely with behavioral psychologists' view that changes to environmental stimuli, like leaders, will affect the individual (Skinner, 1991).

Other scholars have advocated for direct intervention with individuals who are responsible for a particular behavior to create change. The focus on individual employees, or subordinates, as agents of change is a bottom-up perspective. Many organizational change and development scholars suggest that the appropriate level of analysis for creating change is the individual. For example, Pettigrew and Whipp (1993) argued that to create organizational change, individuals should be the target of learning and Argyris (1999) argued that to create

change individuals' theories in use need to be understood and addressed. Further, the fields of training and coaching rely heavily on this perspective suggesting that behavioral change is a function of direct learning by the individuals who are charged with carrying out the behavior (Kozlowski & Salas, 2009).

Beyond the theoretical question of how to create behavioral change, understanding the best approach, whether bottom-up or top-down, is of practical import too. Organizations spend billions of dollars on training, intervention, and consulting programs each year without an understanding of the most appropriate method for creating change (Arthur, Bennett, Edens, & Bell, 2003). Investing in training for hundreds of employees versus a few leaders means potentially a difference of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Practically, adjudicating between approaches to creating behavioral change is critical to understand the most efficient use of organizational resources.

Given the theoretical and practical import of understanding who the target of a behavioral change intervention should be, I examine two targets: employees and leaders. In what follows, I examine interventions on the three primary, and potentially changeable, antecedents to voice: leader behaviors, employee ability, and beliefs about voice, thus focusing on two individual antecedents and one contextual antecedent.

### **Employee Ability**

Myriad studies show that employees prefer to remain silent because it is uncomfortable and difficult to discuss potential problems with superiors (Milliken & Morrison, 2003). Individuals who feel that they have the skills and ability to achieve a particular outcome are more likely to engage in the behaviors required to do so (Bandura, 1977). In the case of speaking up, before engaging in voice, employees will consider whether they have the skills to speak up effectively

to their manager. With this felt ability to speak up, employees should be more likely to speak up even in the presence of a defensive boss or a challenging situation because they will believe that they can do so successfully despite the risk; thus, the risk of speaking up is reduced because they feel capable of speaking up to good effect (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009; 180). Conversely, employees with low voice efficacy will be more fearful and reluctant to speak up because they don't believe that they have the skill or ability to do so effectively. Therefore, in order to encourage employees to speak up, they need to develop the skills to effectively express their concerns and ideas for improvement to superiors.

Several skill areas will help build voice efficacy and increase the anticipated effectiveness of speaking up. First, managing one's emotions and those of the voice target(s) should affect an individual's efficacy to speak up. Emotion regulation theory suggests that individuals' actions are affected by how well they manage their emotional states and those of others. Thus, individuals with higher emotional intelligence are better able to read and respond to another's emotional state. And although emotional intelligence is hard to target in and of itself, emotional competencies can be developed (Goleman, 2000; Cote & Miners, 2006). Learning competencies of recognizing others' emotional states and learning how to respond to them is highly salient to voice, since an employee needs to be able to read his or her boss' emotional state to determine the best method for speaking up. Being emotionally competent should also help employees manage their own emotions and leverage them more effectively to overcome fears about speaking up. For example, if an employee sees an injustice or a particularly unethical issue at work, he or she should be able to channel his or her anger to passionately persuade the boss to prohibit such behavior (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009). Emotional competence may help employees effectively leverage these emotions to persuade managers to act. In the event that managers do



not respond favorably or nothing can be done, developing emotional competence should help employees deal with the disappointment by being better able to contextualize outcomes and not take them so personally, rendering voice efficacy stable regardless of the outcome (Gundlach, Martinko, & Douglas, 2003). In effect, learning emotion regulation strategies should increase the likelihood that an individual engages in voice (Grant, 2013).

Second, the skill of “reading the wind” or assessing situations to know how best to package and sell an idea for improvement will likely increase anticipated effectiveness; developing the skills to frame and deliver the message based on the current situation may increase the likelihood that managers will listen and act upon the suggestions. For example, developing skills on how to frame the issue, present it, appeal to the leader, and potentially bundle issues should give employees efficacy to successfully speak up. Also, having tools to decide who else to involve in the process, determining the appropriate channel (immediate boss or other), and using formal or informal tactics may augment an employee’s belief that he or she is capable of speaking up effectively (Dutton & Ashford, 1993).

Third, learning how to effectively give upward feedback to leaders should help employees speak up to better effect. Since individuals often respond negatively to feedback or not at all (Kluger & DeNisi, 1986), employees need to learn strategies to provide feedback effectively to their superiors. Employees should focus the feedback on needed behavioral or task change rather than information that affects the manager’s self-concept (Kluger & DeNisi, 1986; Dunnette, 1993). When feedback is personalized (i.e., focuses on traits), individuals are less likely to respond positively; when the feedback focuses on the behavior or task that needs to be changed, individuals are more likely to respond positively.

Together, developing these skills will help build employees' belief that they can effectively speak up and reduce the risk associated with doing so. When employees experience higher voice efficacy, or belief that they can speak up effectively, then they should be more likely to engage in voice behavior. In this way, employees who engage in an intervention focused on enhancing voice ability should have higher frequency of voice after the intervention compared to those who do not.

***Hypothesis #1:** Employees who engage in an Employee Ability intervention will have higher mean level posttest frequency of voice behavior compared to a control group.*

### **Employee Beliefs**

*Implicit theories* operate below consciousness resulting in automatic behavioral responses to particular external stimuli. More specifically *implicit voice theories* affect whether employees withhold their voice across situations, irrespective of the current boss' behavior, due to these automatic thought processes that take cues from the environment to validate employees' prior beliefs about speaking up (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). For example, if an employee has a prior held belief about not speaking up in the presence of the boss' boss, irrespective of the current situation, because this belief is automatic and subconscious, he or she will naturally attend to cues in the environment that support this implicit belief and be less likely to speak up (Detert & Edmondson, 2011).

Detert and Edmondson (2011) identified a set of self-protective IVTs used by employees to determine whether it is appropriate to voice. The five IVTs that they identified link speaking up with potentially negative consequences for the speaker. The first IVT is called "*presumed target identification*" and is based on the belief that superiors will interpret suggestions for change as personal criticism. For example, if an employee wanted to offer an idea to improve a

particular work process, the employee may choose to remain silent because of the belief that speaking up about this issue will offend the manager who created the inefficient work process. The second IVT is called “*need solid data or solutions (to speak up)*” and is based on the belief that before speaking up, an employee needs proof of the problem and should have coherent ideas to fix it. The belief is that without being fully prepared and having data to support what the employee is speaking up about, that voice is unsafe. The third IVT is called “*don’t bypass the boss upward*”, the belief that it is unsafe or risky to challenge the boss in front of his or her boss. The view is that doing so would be “going over the boss’ head” and may have negative consequences for the employee’s career. The fourth IVT is called “*don’t embarrass the boss in public*”, the belief that bad news should not be shared in front of others, but rather the employee should offer suggestions and ideas for improvements in private. Last, the fifth IVT is called “*negative career consequences*”, the belief that challenging the status quo will result in managerial retaliation such as poor evaluations, lower pay raises, and limited promotional opportunities.

Taken together, when these beliefs are strong, voice seems risky, inappropriate, and out of place; employees fear consequences of speaking up and instead remain silent (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). The first and only published study to date on IVTs shows that they are a significant predictor of employee silence and explain 12% above and beyond various individual differences (i.e., gender, age, personality, affect, status, and work attitudes) and context (i.e., organizational centralization, psychological safety, leader openness and abusiveness) (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Also, when various contextual factors are interacted with IVTs, the results are not significant. This suggests that the IVTs are not mitigated by current contextual variables like a less hierarchical organizational structure or leader openness. These findings offer

additional validation that IVTs are developed prior to entering an organization, not necessarily mitigated by current boss' characteristics, and potentially difficult to manipulate.

Since IVTs are theorized to persist across contexts, I suggest that IVTs need to be directly addressed in order to create changes in voice behavior. I use an information processing perspective based in cognitive psychology to explain how modification of schema, in this case IVTs, creates behavioral change (specifically, here, voice). Schemas are the underlying cognitive structures that individuals use to organize their experiences (Beck, 1991). Different models for the process of schema change have been outlined by cognitive psychologists. For example, some cognitive psychologists argue for profound change in underlying schema, called the accommodation model (Hollon, Evans, & DeRubeis, 1990), while others argue for a less profound change through the deactivation of schema, called the activation-deactivation model (Ingram & Hollon, 1986). A third model doesn't require underlying change to the schema, but rather requires developing compensatory schema or beliefs to help deal with particular situations (Hollon et al., 1990). But since schemas are not directly measurable, assessing the type of schema change is nearly impossible; instead assessing indicators that represent core beliefs, like IVTs, serve as evidence of cognitive change (Garratt, Ingram, Rand, & Sawalani, 2007).

In order to engender change, first, individuals need to become aware of their core beliefs. When employees encounter a situation where they have an idea for improvement and consider speaking up, if they hold strong IVTs, regardless of the context, they are likely to remain silent because they are using a top-down information processing approach. A top-down approach is based on categories about speaking up to a leader, rather than individuating characteristics of the particular leader and context. To move beyond these beliefs, employees need to become aware of

the top-down process that they use to decide whether to speak up (Argyris, 1999; Fiske & Taylor, 1990).

Once employees are aware of these beliefs, they can begin testing the validity and utility of using them to decide to voice. Cognitive psychologists suggest that to move away from using implicit beliefs, or category-based thinking, individuals need to learn to attend to and devote attention to the unique aspects of their current context (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). To the extent that individuals learn to pay more attention to their current context in light of their implicit beliefs, employees will use a more bottom-up information processing thought process. This type of thought process will help employees make more valid inferences about cause and effect, not based on prior held beliefs, but based on the data in front of them. For example, if an employee holds strong IVTs, but learns to recognize that his leader is open and won't punish him for raising an idea for improvement, then this employee can realize that using his IVTs is invalid and not beneficial. By attending to the mismatch between current context and IVTs, employees will make better informed choices about speaking up.

But simply paying more attention to the current context in relation to implicit beliefs is not enough to engender changes in voice behavior. Employees need to learn to test their beliefs. Adult learning theory suggests that in order to create behavioral change, in addition to experience and reflection, individuals need to experiment with their new knowledge and test it in new situations (Jarvis, 1987; Kolb, 1984). Similarly, to develop a deeper level of learning (i.e., moving from single-loop to double-loop), individuals need to experiment and test their beliefs. Doing so helps individuals reassess their original beliefs and change future actions (Argyris, 1999). In the case of voice behavior, employees need to learn to test their beliefs about speaking up. In many cases, leaders intentionally work to create a safe and efficacious voice context

(Detert & Trevino, 2010), but employees still sometimes remain silent. Through testing, employees should gain confidence in speaking up when they successfully find situations where their leader's behavior does not match their beliefs (Detert & Trevino, 2010). In some cases, employees may find that their beliefs about speaking up match their environment. When this occurs, employees' automatic reaction will likely be to use the external data to support their IVTs; they may decide to remain silent, but through the process of assessing the validity and utility of their beliefs, employees may find it worth speaking up despite the match. Through this process, if employees determine that the issue is important enough, they may seek alternative methods for speaking up (e.g., speaking up with a collective or to a skip-level leader).

Thus, given that IVTs operate like other schema, I posit that interventions to affect these beliefs should be targeted to motivate employees to speak up by raising awareness of these beliefs, developing skills to assess the validity and utility of these beliefs, and encouraging testing and experimentation. To the extent that individuals experience this intervention, I expect that they will be more willing to engage in voice behavior.

*Hypothesis #2: Employees who experience the Employee Beliefs intervention will have higher mean level posttest frequency of voice behavior compared to a control group.*

### **Leader Behavior**

Leaders affect voice behavior by creating opportunities for voice and through their response to employees speaking up. Employees are hyper-aware of leader behaviors that signal whether leaders are open to voice because the success of speaking up depends on the leader's response to suggestions for improvement (Burriss, 2012). Prior research suggests that employees working with leaders who are more open, supportive, and transformational or less abusive speak up more frequently (Detert & Burriss, 2007; Burriss et al., 2008; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Leaders

affect voice by creating opportunity and showing that they welcome and will follow through with the ideas for improvement. When employees see that a leader is open to voice employees will feel that they can speak up successfully (Detert & Burris, 2007).

Often subtle contextual cues, like body language, signal leaders' openness and willingness to listen to employees. Myriad studies on non-verbal behavior suggest that individuals use non-verbal cues to decipher others' social power. For example, Carney, Hall, and LeBeau (2005) found that individuals perceived others who were in more powerful positions to show more facial disgust, facial anger, longer gaze, erect posture, forward lean, open body position, and be more likely to interrupt others' speech. In relation to voice, leaders who demonstrate non-verbal behaviors that express power may exacerbate employees' feelings that it is unsafe to speak up. Additionally, other 'below-the-neck' postures and movements also signal warmth like leaning in, nodding, and open hand gestures. Individuals who display these postures are seen as friendlier and convey more trust and equality (Burgoon, 1991). Conversely, individuals who lean backwards, seem tense, or use intrusive hand gestures (e.g., pointing) are more often perceived as cold (Mehrabian & Ferris, 1967; Carli, LaFleur, & Loeber, 1995). In regard to speaking up, leaders' displays of "immediacy cues", or warm body language, will increase employees' perceptions that it is safe to speak up.

To create an open environment, leaders can more proactively solicit employee input to make decisions about improvements instead of waiting for employees to speak up. Participative or inclusive leaders encourage employees to express ideas and suggestions and use employee suggestions to make decisions (Nehmbard & Edmondson, 2006). These leaders, rather than just having an "open door policy", target employees and directly ask them for ideas for improvement.

When managers solicit ideas for improvement from employees, employees will feel more efficacious about speaking up and be more likely to do so (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012).

In addition to creating opportunities for voice, a manager's response to voice affects individuals' feelings that it is safe and worthwhile to speak up; when employees feel that it is futile to speak up, that is, when managers are unwilling to listen and act upon the ideas for change, employees are more likely to remain silent. Detert and Trevino (2011) found that futility beliefs stemmed from attributions about leader personality and style, such as strong conflict avoidance, low confidence, unwillingness to listen, and an apparent belief that to acknowledge the subordinate's point of view would create conflict. Individuals receiving feedback respond negatively almost a third of the time (Kluger & DeNisi, 1987). Instead of feeling threatened or questioning employees' commitment to the organization, managers should assess their preference for dealing with conflict and learn to manage their emotions in situations where they feel threatened by ideas from employees. More broadly, managers can develop a learning orientation to respond positively to upward feedback since this orientation helps individuals see the opportunity for learning or change rather than feel threatened by it (Heslin & Latham, 2004). Additionally, individuals respond negatively to feedback when it is targeted at the person or their traits, even though the feedback is intended to create behavioral change (Kluger & DeNisi, 1986). When subordinates speak up with feedback to leaders that attacks their traits, they can learn to respond to subordinates better by focusing employees' feedback on required behavioral or task change rather than defensively responding to the personalized feedback.

Futility beliefs may stem from the leaders' lack of ability to persuade higher-ups to devote resources or give them the latitude to make changes (Detert & Trevino, 2011; McClean et al., 2013). Learning the skills of social persuasion and issue selling should thus, increase the



likelihood that managers are able to act upon employees' ideas for improvement. For example, changes are more likely to occur when managers better package, time, and involve the right people (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill & Lawrence, 2001). Even in the event that changes are infeasible, employees will appreciate a leader who attempts to make improvements and closes the loop (McClellan et al., 2013). In sum, leaders who develop an ability to create an open environment, through body language and soliciting ideas for improvement, and learn to respond positively to voice will affect employees' feelings that it is safe and worthwhile to speak up, thus increasing employee voice behavior.

***Hypothesis #3:** Employees who work for leaders who experience in the Leader Behavior intervention will have higher mean level posttest frequency of voice behavior compared to a control group.*

### **Mechanisms**

The calculus that individuals engage in to decide whether or not to speak up is based on several key judgments related to perceptions of safety, efficacy, and futility. Safety is an individual's perception of the risk associated with speaking up, that is, whether or not speaking up will result in negative consequences for one's self or others. Voice is perceived to be a risky behavior and, thus, employees assess the level of risk prior to speaking up. In fact, research shows that employees who feel a greater sense of safety will be more likely to engage in this behavior (Detert & Burris, 2007). The issue selling literature also suggests that individuals refrained from selling issues to management when they perceived that doing so would result in negative consequences to their careers (Ashford et al., 1998).

Efficacy is the perception of one's ability to speak up. When employees feel that they are capable, or have self-efficacy related to voice, they will be more likely to engage in it. Recently,

scholars have also found that feelings of personal control and influence affect whether employees feel that they are capable of speaking up to good effect (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008, 2012).

Additionally, feelings that it is futile or worthwhile to speak up affect employees' willingness to engage in voice (Detert & Trevino; Milliken & Morrison, 2003). The issue selling literature supports the notion that individuals will be more likely to speak up when they feel that doing so will be to good effect (Ashford, 2000). Thus, in what follows, I explore three possible mechanisms through which voice may increase: safety, efficacy, and futility. The factors that affect each of these mechanisms likely differs. Below, I hypothesize the expected effect of each intervention on safety, efficacy, and futility.

### **Employee Ability**

Previously, I hypothesized that positive changes in voice behavior depend on the extent to which employees increased their ability to speak up by building skills related to managing emotions, reading the wind and issue selling, and giving effective feedback. Increasing voice skills should create positive changes in voice behavior through three mechanisms: increased perceptions of safety, self-efficacy to speak up, and increased sense that it is worthwhile to do so.

Employees' self-efficacy related to voice will increase when they develop the skills because they will feel more capable of engaging in successful voice instances. For example, even if a boss is defensive or challenging, employees who learn how to speak up effectively will believe that they can do so despite the difficult situation (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009). Thus, when employees learn strategies for speaking up, they will feel more capable of voicing upward, and be more likely to engage in this challenging behavior (Bandura, 1977).

Employees' feelings of risk will be reduced when they develop the ability to identify and manage their managers' emotions and effectively "read the wind". Likely, they will feel more in control of the situation and be able to minimize the risk associated with speaking by applying the emotion regulation and issue selling strategies. For example, if employees perceive that negative career consequences might ensue if they speak up, to the extent that they learn how to manage the situation better, be more persuasive, and choose the right strategy for voicing their opinion, the perceived risk of negative consequences will be reduced; thus, they will feel safer doing so.

In addition, employees' ability to speak up will also affect their feelings that it is worthwhile to do so. If employees learn skills related to emotion regulation, issue selling, and giving feedback, they will feel that they are better equipped to speak up effectively; that the outcome of voice will be more positive because they can manage the situation better. For example, if employees learn how to properly time their conversation with their managers, frame the messages in a way that will encourage their managers to listen, and present it in an appropriate place, they will perceive the outcome of the situation to be more positive because they are better equipped to sell an issue or idea for improvement.

***Hypothesis #4A:** Employees who engage in the "Employee-Ability" intervention will have higher mean level posttest feelings of safety compared to the control group.*

***Hypothesis #4B:** Employees who engage in the "Employee-Ability" intervention will have higher mean level posttest feelings of voice self-efficacy compared to the control group.*

***Hypothesis #4C:** Employees who engage in the "Employee-Ability" intervention will have lower mean level posttest feelings of futility compared to the control group.*

## **Employee Beliefs**

Employees' beliefs about voice, or implicit voice theories, affect their perceptions that voice is risky, inappropriate, and out of place. Raising awareness of these beliefs, using a more "bottom-up" information-processing approach, and testing beliefs against current context will affect changes in voice behavior by reducing the perceived risk, or increasing the perceived safety, of a voice situation. For example, if employees identify that they hold the strong belief that individuals should not speak up in public so as to not embarrass the boss and then begin using a more data-driven cognitive process that is based on their current context rather than the automatic thought processes driven by this belief, then employees will begin to assess whether a situation is actually as risky as they perceived it to be. On average, employees' feelings of safety should increase to the extent that they recognize that their fear of speaking up was driven by habituated beliefs and not necessarily current context; they will begin to see that the risk associated with speaking up is based on their prior-held beliefs and not representative of their current environment. Thus, they will perceive the situation to be less risky and safer.

***Hypothesis #5A:** Employees who engage in the "Employee Beliefs" intervention will have higher mean level posttest feelings of safety compared to the control group.*

## **Leader Behaviors**

Previously, I hypothesized that employees will increase their voice when their managers learn how to create opportunities for voice and respond positively to speaking up. Managers who are able to create an open environment by using non-threatening body language and soliciting for ideas will affect employees' perceptions that it is safe and worthwhile to speak up. If a manager directly asks employees for ideas for improvement and his/her body language suggests that

he/she is open, then employees will not have to take the risk of approaching the manager or assessing what his/her response will be; the manager's behavior should reduce feelings of risk associated with speaking up.

Additionally, managers who respond positively by listening and then attempting to make the changes that employees suggest will affect employees' feelings that it is worthwhile to speak up. When managers do not act upon employees' suggestions, employees start to feel powerless and acquiesce to the situation; that is, they give up hope of improvement (Detert & Trevino, 2010; Pinder & Harlos, 2001). In effect, when leaders create more opportunities for voice and respond positively, employees will feel that it is safer and less futile to do so.

***Hypothesis #6A:** Employees who work for leaders who engage in the “Leader Behaviors” intervention will have higher mean level posttest feelings of safety compared to the control group.*

***Hypothesis #6B:** Employees who work for leaders who engage in the “Leader Behaviors” intervention will have lower mean level posttest feelings of futility compared to the control group.*

### **Top-down versus Bottom-Up**

The target for change, leaders or employees, is an important next step to elucidate how change occurs within organizations. I propose that targeting employees will likely have a greater change in voice behavior compared to targeting changes to leader behavior, at least initially. Individual interventions give employees more personal control over the decision to voice; they can choose whether, how, and when to speak up. When their ability or beliefs are targeted for change, individuals have more information about the change process; they understand that they are in control of deciding whether to speak up or not because the system in which they are

making this decision does not change. Thus, they will feel more control over the change process and their resistance to engaging in different behaviors will be lower compared to when their leader changes behavior.

Individuals actively make sense of their environments based on prior experience and their present situation. When employees begin working for a manager, they likely assimilate their theories about managers with their current manager's behavior. This sensemaking process culminates in a relatively stable perception of reality (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). When a manager changes his or her behavior, by becoming more "open", this information may contradict with employees' view of the work context. This contradiction may create ambiguity about their manager's expectations. If individuals do not understand what is expected of them, they will be less likely to act (Sawyer, 1999). Over time, employees will assimilate the new information and pattern of behavior into their view of reality, but initially they will be more resistant to the change (even if they view it as positive) because it creates ambiguity in their role and prior relationship with their manager (Gist & Mitchell, 1992).

***Hypothesis #7A:** The magnitude of change in voice will be larger for the employee-focused interventions compared to the leader-focused intervention.*

### **Beliefs vs. Ability**

In comparison to the Ability Intervention, the Beliefs Intervention is more precise; it targets employees' beliefs about voice and their feelings of safety, whereas the ability intervention targets employees' feelings that they are capable of speaking up to good effect, that it is safe and worthwhile to do so. Because the Ability Intervention targets a broader array of attitudes towards voice, it is more likely to create a larger change in voice behavior compared to the Beliefs Intervention.

The Theory of Planned Behavior supports this notion (Ajzen, 1985). This theory states that behavior is a function of ability (i.e., perceived behavioral control), motivation (i.e., attitudes toward behavior), and contextual factors (i.e., subjective norms). Employee IVTs affect motivation to speak up such that employees are less motivated to do so when they hold strong beliefs because voice seems risky, inappropriate, and they fear negative consequences (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Employee skills to speak up, like those proposed the Ability Intervention, are related to whether employees feel that they can speak up to good effect. In this way, IVTs affect employees' motivation to speak up, while skills to speak up affect employee motivation and ability. Given that the Ability Intervention targets both ability and motivation, I suggest that it will have a stronger effect on voice behavior compared to the Beliefs Intervention.

A recent meta-analysis on behavior change tested the relationship between motivation and behavior and found that motivation was a strong predictor of subsequent behavior change. Specifically, they found that a medium to large change in motivation ( $d = 0.66$ ) causes a small to medium change in behavior ( $d = 0.36$ ) (Webb & Sheeran, 2006). But, more importantly here, they found that the effect of motivation on behavior was enhanced when a person felt that they had control over the behavior. In relation to voice, the expected effect of the Ability Intervention should be higher since it targets both motivation (safety) and ability (voice efficacy and futility).

***Hypothesis #7B:** The magnitude of change will be larger for the Ability Intervention compared to the Beliefs Intervention.*

### **The Effect of Change on Employee Subjective Performance**

I propose that employees who speak up more post-intervention should be rated as higher performers by their direct managers because employees who participate in the Ability Intervention will feel more efficacious and safer speaking up; they'll be more confident when

doing so and will be better able to “read the wind” to make an informed choice about speaking up. Managers will perceive this extra effort to improve the workplace as positive, especially because it will appear well-thought through and beneficial to the manager and work unit. For example, an employee who considers the timing, strategic implications, and framing of an issue will be better able to persuade the manager that the issue is important. The manager will perceive the employee’s idea as beneficial to the work unit and will be more likely to rate the employee higher because of his or her extra effort.

***Hypothesis #8A:** Employees in the Ability Intervention will have higher performance compared to the control group.*

Employees who participate in the Beliefs Intervention learn how to make more data-driven decisions regarding when to speak up. To the extent that individuals learn to assess their context effectively and not rely on prior held beliefs that limit their willingness to engage in voice, employees will likely make more informed and better voice decisions. In doing so, they will speak up in situations where voice is appropriate and useful. Managers will appreciate the awareness of context and willingness to speak up. Thus, managers will be more likely to rate these employees as high performers.

***Hypothesis #8B:** Employees in the Beliefs Intervention will have higher performance compared to the control group.*

Managers who participate in the Leader Behavior Intervention will learn to create opportunities for their employees to speak up. If employees engage in speaking up when managers create these opportunities, managers will be appreciative of the exchange occurring: managers put in effort to make employees feel safe and efficacious speaking up and employees



reciprocate by presenting ideas for improvement. In this case, managers will be more likely to rate these employees as outstanding performers because they reciprocated effort.

*Hypothesis #8C: Employees whose leaders experienced the Leader Behavior*

*Intervention will have higher performance compared to the control group.*

Likely, employees who engage in the Ability Intervention will acquire better political skill to speak up, that is, a better ability to “read the wind”. To the extent that they do this well, managers will appreciate their ideas more because employees raised them in a more efficacious manner. Additionally, employees who speak up to leaders who engaged in the Leader Intervention will view this response as reciprocation. The employees who engaged in the Belief Intervention will likely speak up more, but because of the nature of the intervention, their voice does not carry the same efficacy or implications as those in the Employee Ability or Leader Behavior Interventions. Thus, comparatively, the two latter interventions will have a larger magnitude of change compared to the Beliefs Intervention.

*Hypothesis #8D: Employees who experience the Ability Intervention and whose leaders experienced the Leader Behavior Intervention will have higher performance compared to the Beliefs Intervention.*

## **METHODS**

### **Sample**

I conducted this investigation in an information technology (IT) consulting company, TechCo, which is based in India. To garner participation, I worked with senior leaders at TechCo to contact their middle managers about taking part in a study on employee voice. I positioned this study as important to senior and middle managers because the company has been struggling with a high turnover rate and high competition from competitors. I suggested that understanding

issues around employee participation would benefit their work processes and employee outcomes. Senior leaders sent an email notification with details about the study to their direct managers asking them to contact me if they wanted to participate. Upon hearing from middle managers who agreed to participate, I asked them put me in contact with at least four of their direct reports to take part in the study. I secured initial commitment from 60 middle managers and 263 of their direct reports.

### **Field Experiment**

I relied upon a pretest-posttest experimental design with a control group to test my hypotheses (Campbell & Stanley, 1963); thus I had three treatment conditions and one control group. The treatment condition groups included: Employee Ability, Employee Beliefs, and Leader Behaviors, each described below. I randomly assigned managers and their direct reports to each condition (using a random number table), which resulted in the following sample sizes (managers, direct reports) across conditions at Time 1: Employee Ability (15, 69), Employee Beliefs (25, 47), Leader Behaviors (25, 73), and Control Group (12, 74). As described in more detail below, the direct reports of the middle managers participated in the Employee Ability and Employee Beliefs interventions and the middle managers participated in the Leader Behaviors intervention. Conditions were not crossed such that if a direct report participated in one of the employee interventions (either Ability or Beliefs), then the employee's manager did not participate in an intervention. To ensure comparability across groups, each intervention was structured in a similar manner. For example, each was three hours long, included a combination of lecture and individual exercises, and was conducted by the same instructor (me, the primary researcher). Additionally, managers were not aware of the content of the training sessions in which their employees participated and employees were not aware of the content of the training

sessions in which their managers participated. The content and additional detail for each intervention is below.

<b><u>Equivalent Groups Pretest Posttest Design</u></b>			
	Pretest	Intervention	Posttest
Group A: Employee-Ability	O <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>EIVT</sub>	O <sub>2</sub>
Group B: Employee- Beliefs	O <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>LIVT</sub>	O <sub>2</sub>
Group C: Leader Behaviors	O <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>ELB</sub>	O <sub>2</sub>
Group D: Control	O <sub>1</sub>		O <sub>2</sub>

### **Validity Issues**

Even when subjects are randomly assigned to groups, various threats to internal validity exist. I designed the field experiment in such a way to account for several threats. To minimize diffusion of treatments (when individuals receive some benefit from the intervention despite not directly being involved with it), I sampled based on manager; this eliminates the occurrence of individuals within the same group attending different trainings. Additionally, given the nature of the work, that it requires handling confidential client data, employees are physically located in highly secure office spaces; this increases physical barriers to entry and minimizes the interaction between employees working for different managers. These structures, both my sampling strategy and the physical layout of employees, also help to minimize rivalry between treatment groups and resentful demoralization of respondents receiving less desirable treatments.

Subjects were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups, however, certain people dropped out over the course of the study, resulting in a possible selection effect where previously equivalent groups may now become nonequivalent. To minimize this effect, I garnered leader support and resources from TechCo to encourage employees to continue responding across time

periods. Additionally, I conducted my analyses with control variables for selection effects; in each case the results remain significant with and without the controls.

### **Employee Ability Intervention.**

I referred to the Employee Ability Intervention as a “skill building” training session in all materials with participants. In keeping with the theory of how employees’ ability to speak up affects their willingness to engage in more voice, the content of this intervention included a combination of lecture and exercises related to emotion regulation, issue selling, and giving feedback. I used the behavioral modeling training (BMT) method since the purpose of this intervention is to develop specific skills to speak up. This method is one of the most widely-used, well-researched psychologically-based intervention techniques (Taylor, Russ-Eft, & Chan, 2005) and is particularly potent for teaching procedural knowledge and skills. Based on Bandura’s social learning theory, it emphasizes the following steps:

- A) Describe to trainees a set of well-defined behaviors/skills to be learned;
- B) Provide a model or models displaying the effective use of these behaviors;
- C) Provide opportunities for trainees to practice using these behaviors;
- D) Provide feedback and social reinforcement to trainees following practice;
- E) Take steps to maximize transfer of those behaviors to the job.

In line with these steps, first, I described the concept of speaking up to participants and explained the potential benefits of doing so, as well as the potential risks. Next, I had participants reflect on their own experiences (or another’s if an individual did not have personal experience) speaking up- positive and negative- and then brainstorm what factors led to positive experiences. This exercise served to get participants thinking about their own strategies for speaking up. Then, I described to participants a well-defined set of behaviors related to emotion regulation, issue-

selling, and giving feedback, and provided examples of effective use of these skills. After providing this information, participants then analyzed scenarios that I had created in advance. I asked them to analyze what emotion regulation, issue selling, and/or giving feedback strategies they would use in each situation. Next, participants created their own scenarios based on experiences at work and practiced speaking up in pairs, taking turns to play the role of employee and manager. Pairs then role-played in front of the rest of the group and together we analyzed the different strategies used. Last, individuals were asked to create goals to transfer their new knowledge back to their job. To transfer the learning back to the workplace, I contacted participants once per week via email for the three weeks post-in-person intervention session. In each email, I gave participants a reflective and behavioral exercise based on the goals that they set at the end of the training session. Appendix B provides samples of the exercises used in this intervention.

### **Employee Beliefs Intervention.**

I referred to the Employee Beliefs Intervention as “beliefs about speaking up” in all materials with participants. In keeping with the theory of how employees’ beliefs affect their willingness to engage in voice, the content of this intervention included a combination of lecture and exercises meant to uncover participants’ beliefs about speaking up, assess the utility of such beliefs, and create alternative strategies. The basis for this intervention is information-processing theories and behavioral-cognitive therapy treatments.

In line with these cognitive foundations, the first step in this intervention was to raise participants’ awareness of their beliefs about voice. I did this through an individual exercise where they read scenarios that varied based on the five primary implicit voice theories that individuals hold about speaking up (i.e., presumed target identification, need solid data or

solutions, don't bypass the boss upward, don't embarrass the boss downward, and negative career consequences). For example, I created two scenarios related to 'need solid data or solutions' in which I had individuals rate the likelihood that they would speak up in a situation where they did not have solid data or solutions and in a situation where they did have solid data or solutions. Across all ten scenarios, I had individuals compare the likelihood that they would speak up to uncover whether there were situations where they felt that it was inappropriate to do so. Next, I lectured about beliefs about speaking up and explained to participants how they operate cognitively and affect voice behavior. From there, we explored how to assess whether or not an individual's beliefs were based on reality (actual data) or whether they were automatic thought processes affecting behavior. To do so, I had participants list the beliefs that they identified in the first step and then ask themselves whether or not this belief was based on data they observed in their current job, with their current manager. For example, if an individual stated that he did not think he should speak up in public meetings so as to avoid embarrassing the boss upward or downward, I asked him to reflect on the following question: "Yes or No? My boss uses words and actions indicating that pointing out things in front of others without first discussing with him/her is not allowed." The purpose of this step is to train participants how to recognize whether and when they are using a top-down information processing approach compared to a bottom-up approach (that is, schema-driven versus data-driven). The next step was to develop a strategy for testing their beliefs on the job. For example, if an individual believed it was inappropriate to speak up in public meetings, I encouraged this person to create a strategy for engaging in different behavior back on the job (i.e., speak up in a public meeting) and to use a more data-driven information processing approach to determine the right course of action (i.e., whether to speak up or not). Last, individuals were asked to create goals to transfer

their new knowledge back to their job. To transfer the learning back to the workplace, I contacted participants once per week for the three weeks post-in-person intervention session. In each email, I gave participants a reflective and behavioral exercise based on the goals that they set at the end of the training session. Appendix C provides samples of the exercises used in this intervention.

### **Leader Behavior Intervention.**

I referred to the Leader Behavior Intervention as “leader behavior and employee upward communication” in all materials with managers. In keeping with the theory of how leader behaviors affect employees’ willingness to engage in voice, the content of this intervention included a combination of lecture and exercises meant to raise awareness of each manager’s behaviors that affect whether or not his/her direct reports engage in voice. Similar to the Employee Ability Intervention, I used the behavioral modeling training approach since the goal of this intervention was to develop leaders’ skills to encourage voice.

The first portion of the training session focused on managers’ relationships with their direct reports and the reasons why their direct reports engage or do not engage in voice behavior. I provided information on the various reasons why individuals engage in voice and then had managers participate in a series of exercises focusing their attention on their direct reports’ behaviors. For example, after explaining the various aspects of their behavior that affects whether their direct reports engage in voice, I had managers reflect on their own behavior and think about how it affects their direct reports (i.e., are they open, how frequently they consult their direct reports for ideas, body language and verbal language, etc.). Additionally, in line with the theory on voice behavior, I had managers assess their own ability and motivation to respond

to employees' voice. The next step was to assess what they could do differently given the voice behavior and possible reasons for silence within their work group.

The second half of the training focused on the managers' relationships upward with their direct managers. The reason for this is that oftentimes employees feel as though it is futile to speak up and so whether managers are able to influence upward affects employees' willingness to engage in voice behavior. In this section, I asked managers to think about their strategies for speaking up and then reviewed the literature on issue selling. Managers then practiced selling an issue upward that their direct employee voiced. Last, I asked managers to set goals to engage in different behaviors upon returning to their jobs to help transfer their learning. Like the other intervention sessions, to transfer the learning back to the workplace, I contacted managers once per week for the three weeks post-in-person intervention session. In each email, I gave participants a reflective and behavioral exercise based on the goals that they set at the end of the training session. Appendix D provides samples of the exercises used in this intervention.

### **Control Group.**

Managers and employees in the control group were not provided with any guidance regarding voice behavior. I provided them the surveys pre- and post- and asked for their participation in a study on upward communication in the workplace.

### **Measures**

**Overall Voice.** I measured overall voice based on Van Dyne and LePine (1998) and Detert and Burris (2007). Sample items include, "I give suggestions to my manager about how to make this group better, even if others disagree" and "I speak up to my manager with ideas to address employees' needs and concerns." I collected overall voice from employees ( $\alpha = 0.66$ ) and managers ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ).



**Voice Safety.** I based this measure on voice safety as measured by Morrison, Wheeler-Smith, and Kamdar (2011). Sample items include, “I feel safe developing and making recommendations concerning issues that affect this workgroup” and “ I feel safe speaking up and encouraging others in this group to get involved in issues that affect the group.” I adapted items to the individual-level and obtained ratings from employees. (alpha = 0.88)

**Voice Efficacy.** I measured this variable based on Kish-Gephart et al.’s (2009) definition, “learned belief in one’s competence to speak up effectively and to good effect” (180). Since this variable has not been measured before, I based it on Morrison, Wheeler-Smith, and Kamdar (2011). Sample items include, “I feel capable of developing and making recommendations concerning issues that affect this workgroup” and “I feel capable of speaking up and encouraging others in this group to get involved in issues that affect the group.” I adapted items to the individual-level and obtained ratings from employees. This variable showed good reliability (alpha = 0.84).

**Futility.** I created this measure based on research describing feelings of futility, that it is worthwhile to speak up, as described by Detert & Trevino (2010). Sample items include, “It is worthwhile to speak up to my manager” and “When I speak up to my manager, things get better.” I collected futility ratings from employees (alpha =0.76).

**Self-protective beliefs about Voice.** I measured beliefs about voice using Detert and Edmondson’s (2011) IVT scale including items related to: presumed target identification, need solid data or solutions, don’t bypass the boss upward, don’t embarrass the boss in public, and negative career consequences. Sample items include, “Someone who helps create a process or routine is likely to be offended when others suggest changes” and

“Presenting underdeveloped, under-researched ideas to your group is never a good idea.”

I collected these ratings from employees ( $\alpha = 0.79$ ).

**Control Variables.** I also controlled for manager openness (Detert & Burris, 2007), proactive personality (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998), and job mobility (Burris et al., 2008) based on prior research on the factors that may influence voice behavior.

**Subjective Performance.** Managers rated each employee’s performance using four items based on the scale from MacKensie, Podsakoff, and Fetter (1991). Sample items include, “All things considered, this employee is one of my best employees” and “All things considered, this employee is outstanding at his/her job” ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ). Appendix A shows all items.

## RESULTS

### Manipulation Checks

I checked the manipulation for the employee condition by surveying participants at the end of the training session. I asked them to respond to the following questions: 1) Today I learned about how my beliefs about speaking up affect whether or not I communicate upward to my boss and 2) Today, I learned about how to develop skills or tactics to speak up to my boss. The purpose of this manipulation check was to assess whether or not participants were aware of the content of the training session. To assess whether or not participants in the Employee Beliefs Intervention understood that the content was about beliefs and that the participants in the Employee Ability Intervention understood that the content was about their skills to speak up, I conducted an ANOVA to test for the differences across conditions for both questions. For both the Ability and Beliefs Interventions, the results were significant. Table 1 below displays the results for the employee interventions.

**TABLE 1: ANOVA Results for Employee Intervention Content**

	Today, I learned about how <i>my beliefs</i> about speaking up affect whether or not I communicate upward to my boss.	Today, I learned about <i>how to develop skills or tactics</i> to speak up to my boss.	F-statistic
Ability	2.11	4.42	124.31**
Beliefs	3.81	2.37	167.79**

I checked the manipulation for the leader condition by asking three questions related to the content of the training (e.g., “Today, I learned about how my employees’ beliefs about voice affect whether they communicate upward to me” and “Today, I learned about how my behavior affects whether my employees speak up to me”) and two that were not covered in the training (e.g., “Today, I learned how to monitor the external environment more effectively”). I assessed the efficacy of the training by comparing managers’ responses to the two sets of questions. I found that managers in the trainings scored significantly higher on the three content-related questions compared to the non-content related questions, which suggests that they were aware of the content of the training. Table 2 below displays the results for the leader intervention.

**TABLE 2: ANOVA Results for Leader Intervention Content**

	Content-Related Questions	Non-Content-Related Questions	T-statistic
Leader Response	4.42	3.35	t= 21.62**

### Missing Data

Prior to conducting my analyses, I assessed the extent to which missing data could affect the validity of my results. I tested for differences between the Time 1 sample and Time 2 sample through an ANOVA. I examined differences related to: employee characteristics (proactive personality, learning orientation, beliefs about voice, psychological safety, futility, efficacy),

employee behaviors (voice), leader-member exchange, manager characteristics (openness), and subjective performance. In all cases, the differences between the Time 1 and Time 2 samples were not significant. Table 3 below displays the sample sizes for employee and manager raters.

**TABLE 3: Sample Sizes**

	<b>Employees</b>		<b>Managers</b>	
	<b>Time 1</b>	<b>Time 2</b>	<b>Time 1</b>	<b>Time 2</b>
Ability	69	30	15	13
Beliefs	47	25	8	3
Leader Behaviors	73	30	25	7
Control Group	74	42	12	10
Total	263	127	60	33

**Rater Information**

For the employee interventions (Employee Ability and Employee Beliefs), employees participated in the training session and completed the survey at Time 1 and 2. Their direct managers also completed surveys at Time 1 and 2, but did not participate in any training program. For the manager intervention (Leader Behaviors), managers participated in the training session and completed the survey at Time 1 and 2. Their direct reports also completed surveys at Time 1 and 2, but did not participate in any training program. For the analyses below, I report voice behavior as rated by a) employees and b) managers, and compare the results across raters.

**Main Effects on Voice Behavior**

Next, I examined the effects of each intervention on individual-level voice behavior as rated by employees (self-rated) and managers (direct boss' rating). I used a univariate analysis of covariance to compare the effect of the three intervention groups and control group on Time 2 voice behavior. I used an ANCOVA to account for the different starting points, and thus regression toward the mean, in voice behavior across conditions. Prior to conducting the

following analyses, I also tested for whether the efficacy of each intervention depended on the Time 1 level of voice by including an interaction between Time 1 voice and the intervention condition. In each case, the interaction was not significant, which suggests the efficacy of each intervention is not dependent on the initial level of voice.

Additionally, since individuals are nested within managers, prior to conducting the below analyses, I employed multilevel analyses to model the non-independence resulting from manager groupings. The between-manager variation is not statistically different from zero, meaning the variance attributable to the manager is insignificant in explaining the individual-level dependent variable. Thus, for the following analyses, I used a single-level model with individual-level voice as the dependent variable. I also assessed the extent to which selection effects may affect my analyses. Despite random sampling into conditions, oftentimes field experiments are subject to issues of mortality that can create selection effects. I conducted the following analyses controlling for various factors (manager openness, proactive personality, and job mobility), but in each case, found that the results were consistent without the control variables. Thus, below I explain the most parsimonious models.

### ***Overall Voice Behavior***

Table 4 lists the means, standard deviations, and correlations for all variables in the study. Table 5 displays the results of my initial model testing for differences in voice, as rated *by employees* (self-rated), across the conditions. The results suggest that the Employee Ability Intervention significantly and positively improved Time 2 voice behavior compared to the control group ( $\beta = 0.48$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.01$ ). Additional pairwise comparisons (using a Bonferroni confidence interval adjustment for multiple comparisons) suggest that the effect from the

Employee Ability intervention on voice behavior is significantly different from the effect of the other two interventions (at a p-value <0.01 for both comparisons).

Table 6 displays the results of my initial model testing for differences in voice, as rated *by managers* (direct boss' ratings) across the conditions. The results are not shown for the Beliefs Intervention due to low sample size (n= 15). The sample size for this intervention is lower than the others because I questioned the validity of data from several managers (n=4) and I chose not to include it in the below analyses. In these cases, the managers rated all employees the same value for each question or they responded with exactly the same answers for Time 2 as for Time 1.

The results suggest that the Employee Ability Intervention significantly and positively improved Time 2 voice behavior compared to the control group ( $\beta= 0.28$ , p-value <0.01). Additional pairwise comparisons (using a Bonferroni confidence interval adjustment for multiple comparisons) suggest that the effect from the Employee Ability Intervention on voice behavior is significantly different from the Leader Behavior Intervention (at a p-value <0.01). Thus, the results for the effect of the Employee Ability intervention on overall voice are consistent across the self- and manager-rated voice and support Hypothesis #1, but not Hypotheses #2 or #3.

**TABLE 4: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations**

		Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Proactive Personality	4.06	0.50	1							
2	Manager Openness	3.88	0.72	0.19**	1						
3	Job Mobility	2.99	0.57	0.08	-0.22**	1					
4	Voice Safety Time 1	3.77	0.55	0.23**	0.44**	-0.13	1				
5	Voice Efficacy Time 1	3.86	0.49	0.30**	0.36**	0	0.67**	1			
6	Futility	4.01	0.60	0.23**	0.58**	-0.20**	0.43**	0.35**	1		
7	Voice Safety Time 2	3.66	0.59	0.11	0.30**	0.07	0.26**	0.22*	0.13	1	
8	Voice Efficacy Time 2	3.76	0.54	0.03	0.31**	0.1	0.24**	0.26**	0.20*	0.79**	1
9	Futility T2	3.89	0.67	0.14	0.38**	0.38	0.15	0.15	0.52**	0.47**	0.20**
10	Overall Voice (EE rated) Time 1	2.86	1.00	0.17	0.23**	0.23	0.19**	0.24**	0.16**	0.30**	0.43**
11	Promotive (EE rated) Time 1	2.80	0.94	0.24**	0.27**	0.08	0.16*	0.28**	0.13*	0.23*	0.27**
12	Prohibitive (EE rated) Time 1	2.95	0.80	0.29**	0.25**	0.09	0.18*	0.31**	0.13*	0.29**	0.41**
13	Overall Voice (EE rated) Time 2	3.15	0.91	0.06	0.20*	0.04	0.09	0.15	0.05	0.37**	0.49**
14	Promotive (EE rated) Time 2	3.07	0.94	0.18*	0.19*	0.03	0.03	0.05	0.08	0.31**	0.36**
15	Prohibitive (EE rated) Time 2	3.96	0.80	0.15	0.23**	0.04	0.09	0.16	0.18*	0.32**	0.38**
16	Overall Voice (Mgr rated) Time 1	3.04	1.11	0.16	0.14	-0.05	0.33**	0.25**	0.16	-0.1	0.04
17	Promotive (Mgr rated) Time 1	2.81	1.06	0.14	0.06	-0.07	0.26**	0.17*	0.18*	-0.23	-0.12
18	Prohibitive (Mgr rated) Time 1	3.00	0.92	0.17	-0.19	-0.05	0.17	0.19*	0.11	-0.14	0.04
19	Overall Voice (Mgr rated) Time 2	3.37	1.01	0.09	0.06	-0.14	0.15	0.17	-0.02	-0.19	-0.06
20	Promotive (Mgr rated) Time 2	2.77	0.74	0.07	0.02	-0.08	0.24**	0.13	0.10	-0.33*	-0.19
21	Prohibitive (Mgr rated) Time 2	3.34	0.82	0.15	-0.08	0.07	0.16	0.25*	0.10	-0.18	0.07
22	Subjective Performance T1	3.79	0.83	0.05	0.10	0.00	0.30**	0.22*	0.05	0.50**	0.30*
23	Subjective Performance T2	4.06	0.67	-0.02	0.16	-0.13	0.23*	0.32**	0.01	0.42**	0.2

		<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>1</b>	Proactive Personality										
<b>2</b>	Manager Openness										
<b>3</b>	Job Mobility										
<b>4</b>	Voice Safety Time 1										
<b>5</b>	Voice Efficacy Time 1										
<b>6</b>	Futility										
<b>7</b>	Voice Safety Time 2										
<b>8</b>	Voice Efficacy Time 2										
<b>9</b>	Futility T2	1									
<b>10</b>	Overall Voice (EE rated) Time 1	0.16**	1								
<b>11</b>	Promotive (EE rated) Time 1	0.19**	0.48**	1							
<b>12</b>	Prohibitive (EE rated) Time 1	0.25**	0.45**	0.59**	1						
<b>13</b>	Overall Voice (EE rated) Time 2	0.40**	0.48**	0.47**	0.45**	1					
<b>14</b>	Promotive (EE rated) Time 2	0.37**	0.35**	0.53**	0.38**	0.71**	1				
<b>15</b>	Prohibitive (EE rated) Time 2	0.38**	0.47**	0.35**	0.45**	0.66**	0.67**	1			
<b>16</b>	Overall Voice (Mgr rated) Time 1	-0.22	0.05	0.08	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.00	1		
<b>17</b>	Promotive (Mgr rated) Time 1	-0.24	0.03	0.05	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.72**	1	
<b>18</b>	Prohibitive (Mgr rated) Time 1	0.09	0.00	0.06	0.09	0.1	0.00	0.00	0.48**	0.69**	1
<b>19</b>	Overall Voice (Mgr rated) Time 2	-0.30**	-0.05	0.02	-0.18	0	0.19	0.01	0.82**	0.59**	0.44**
<b>20</b>	Promotive (Mgr rated) Time 2	-0.40**	-0.03	0.04	-0.13	0.04	0.04	-0.08	0.67**	0.81**	0.61**
<b>21</b>	Prohibitive (Mgr rated) Time 2	-0.11	-0.05	0.15	0.07	0.04	0.04	-0.05	0.41**	0.67	0.79**
<b>22</b>	Subjective Performance T1	0.14	0.13	0.18*	0.17	0.36**	0.32*	0.3	0.35**	0.40	0.31*
<b>23</b>	Subjective Performance T2	0.16	0.04	0.10	-0.10	0.25	0.35*	0.24	0.44**	0.25	0.12



		<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>1</b>	Proactive Personality				
<b>2</b>	Manager Openness				
<b>3</b>	Job Mobility				
<b>4</b>	Voice Safety Time 1				
<b>5</b>	Voice Efficacy Time 1				
<b>6</b>	Futility				
<b>7</b>	Voice Safety Time 2				
<b>8</b>	Voice Efficacy Time 2				
<b>9</b>	Futility T2				
<b>10</b>	Overall Voice (EE rated) Time 1				
<b>11</b>	Promotive (EE rated) Time 1				
<b>12</b>	Prohibitive (EE rated) Time 1				
<b>13</b>	Overall Voice (EE rated) Time 2				
<b>14</b>	Promotive (EE rated) Time 2				
<b>15</b>	Prohibitive (EE rated) Time 2				
<b>16</b>	Overall Voice (Mgr rated) Time 1				
<b>17</b>	Promotive (Mgr rated) Time 1				
<b>18</b>	Prohibitive (Mgr rated) Time 1				
<b>19</b>	Overall Voice (Mgr rated) Time 2	1			
<b>20</b>	Promotive (Mgr rated) Time 2	0.71**	1		
<b>21</b>	Prohibitive (Mgr rated) Time 2	0.40**	0.67**	1	
<b>22</b>	Subjective Performance T1	0.28**	0.18	0.22	1
<b>23</b>	Subjective Performance T2	0.47**	0.36**	0.31**	0.77**

**TABLE 5: Employee-rated Voice Main Effects**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Sample Size Time 2</b>	<b>Pre-intervention Voice</b>		<b>Post-intervention Voice</b>		<b>Post-/Pre-Difference</b>	<b>Beta Estimate</b>
		Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.		
Ability	30	2.53	0.84	3.44	1.10	0.91	0.48**
Beliefs	25	2.94	0.89	3.15	0.62	0.21	0.06
Leader	30	3.00	1.37	2.83	0.94	-0.17	-0.12
Control	42	2.86	0.71	3.01	0.73	0.15	--

**TABLE 6: Manager-rated Voice Main Effects**

<b>Condition</b>	<b>Sample Size Time 2</b>	<b>Pre-intervention Voice</b>		<b>Post-intervention Voice</b>		<b>Post-/Pre-Difference</b>	<b>Beta</b>
		Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.		
Ability	36	3.00	1.18	3.62	1.14	0.62	0.28**
Beliefs	15						--
Leader	25	3.00	1.22	2.90	0.76	-0.1	-0.06
Control	32	3.04	1.11	3.3	1.01	0.26	--

### **Mechanisms**

Next, I examined the mechanisms through which the intervention were proposed to affect voice behavior. Prior to conducting my analyses, I assessed the extent to which these three mechanisms could be differentiated through an exploratory factor analysis (principal axis factoring) with an oblique rotation (direct oblim). Three factors with eigenvalues over 1.0 emerged, which suggests that safety, futility, and efficacy are distinct. Table 7 shows the factor loadings.

**TABLE 7: Exploratory Factor Analysis for Mechanisms**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Factor 1</b>	<b>Factor 2</b>	<b>Factor 3</b>
Efficacy 1	0.71		
Efficacy 2	0.75		
Efficacy 3	0.81		
Efficacy 4	0.80		
Efficacy 5	0.53		
Efficacy 6	0.64		
Safety 1		0.77	
Safety 2		0.77	
Safety 3		0.54	
Safety 4		0.57	
Safety 5		0.77	
Safety 6		0.62	
Futility 1			0.84
Futility 2			0.89
Futility 3			0.90
Futility 4			0.55

In Hypotheses #4A-#6B, I suggested that the interventions affected voice behavior through three potential pathways: voice safety, voice efficacy, and futility. Because each of these mechanisms is an internal attitude and not a behavior that is easily recognizable by others, the best rater for these analyses is the employees themselves. Thus, for the following analyses, I use ratings of safety, efficacy, and futility as provided by the employees at Time 2. I used ANCOVA (accounting for Time 1 values) to test for differences in each mechanism across the interventions. Table 8 shows the results for each mechanism across the interventions. The Ability Intervention significantly and positively reduced employees' futility beliefs and increased safety beliefs.

**TABLE 8: Mechanisms ANCOVA Results**

Mechanism	Ability			Beliefs			Leader Behavior			Control		
	Pre	Post	Diff	Pre	Post	Diff	Pre	Post	Diff	Pre	Post	Diff
<b>Futility</b>	4.00	4.24	0.24**	4.07	3.80	-0.27	3.95	3.83	-0.12	4.06	3.79	-0.27
<b>Safety</b>	3.68	3.88	0.20*	3.91	3.62	-0.29	3.78	3.54	-0.24	3.77	3.6	-0.17
<b>Efficacy</b>	3.78	3.74	-0.04	3.89	3.66	-0.23	3.85	3.67	-0.18	3.87	3.82	-0.05

I also tested for mediation using bootstrapping methods as recommended by Shrout and Bolger (2002) and Preacher and Hayes (2004). The bootstrapping method has recently been called the best method for detecting indirect effects and testing for mediation because it does not rely upon statistical criteria (i.e., Baron and Kenny approach) or the assumption that the sampling distribution of the indirect effect is normal (i.e., Sobel Test). Instead, this method takes the original sample of size  $n$  and uses it as a representation of the broader population. The data are then resampled to mimic the original sampling process and the indirect effect is estimated based on the resampled data. This method is appropriate for small sample sizes, has the greatest power of the methods for testing indirect effects, and the best Type I error control (Hayes, 2009). Thus, for the following analysis, I relied upon the bootstrapping method to test for whether the effect of each intervention affected Time 2 voice behavior through each mechanism.

I examined whether the impact of each intervention affected overall voice as rated by both employees themselves and their direct manager, through futility, safety, and efficacy. Across these different analyses, the only significant indirect effect occurs between the Ability Intervention and self-rated overall voice through futility (Observed Coeff: 0.09; Bootstrap SE: 0.03;  $p$ -value < 0.01). These results support Hypotheses #4C, but not #4A, #4B, #5A, #6A, or

#6B.

### Individual Performance

Next, I examined the extent to which changes in voice behavior affected individual performance. In Hypotheses #7, I suggested that individual performance would increase to the extent that voice behavior increased. First, I used ANCOVA (accounting for Time 1 values) to test for differences in individual performance across the interventions. Table 9 shows the results for each mechanism across the interventions. The Ability Intervention significantly and positively increased individual performance as rated by their direct managers.

**TABLE 9: ANCOVA Results for Subjective Performance**

<u>Condition</u>	Sample Size Time 2	Pre-intervention Voice		Post- intervention Voice		Post-/Pre- Difference	Beta Estimate
		Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.		
Ability	36	3.84	0.86	4.31	0.63	0.47	4.20*
Beliefs	15	4.27	0.74	4.37	0.62	0.10	4.13
Leader	22	3.50	0.8	3.65	0.76	0.15	3.96
Control	32	3.84	0.81	3.93	0.52	0.09	3.94

I also tested for mediation using bootstrap methods as recommended by Shrout and Bolger (2002) and Preacher and Hayes (2004). I examined whether the impact of each intervention affected performance (as rated by managers), through voice (as rated by employees and managers). Across these different analyses, the only significant indirect effect occurs between the Ability Intervention and manager-rated performance through manager-rated overall voice (Observed Coeff: 0.48; Bootstrap SE: 0.11; p-value < 0.01). These results support Hypothesis #8A and partial support for Hypothesis #8D because the Ability Intervention affected performance through increased voice and the impact of the Ability Intervention was stronger on

performance compared to the Belief Intervention. Hypotheses #8B and #8C were not supported because the Leader and Belief Interventions did not affect performance.

### **Additional Analyses**

In light of these findings, I explored additional analyses to understand possible reasons for the lack of findings for the Beliefs and Leader Interventions. Several plausible reasons for the lack of findings exist. First, the efficacy of the interventions may be in question. Second, the theory of change proposed could be inaccurate or incomplete. In regard to the first possibility, my manipulation check suggests that individuals in the intervention sessions understood the content, however additional analyses show that the attitudes (i.e., safety), beliefs (i.e., IVTs), and behaviors (i.e., leader behaviors) did not improve. For example, I conducted ANCOVA analyses for the Beliefs Intervention to assess whether individuals' beliefs changed compared to the control group. Results show that the change in beliefs for individuals in the Beliefs Intervention was not significant (See Table 10 below). In regard to the leader intervention, I assessed the extent to which employees viewed their leaders as more open, engaged in more social monitoring, or closed the loop more. In each case, the change was not significant (see Table 11 below). Based on conversations with employees at TechCo after the interventions, I have no reason to believe that these two intervention groups were subject to different organizational conditions compared to the Ability Intervention group. Thus, I can preliminarily rule out that the results of these two interventions were caused by history or other issues of validity. Instead, these findings suggest a revision of the initial theory of change that I proposed. I revise my initial theory in the Overall Discussion chapter below.

**TABLE 10: Implicit Voice Theories Mean Comparison**

<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Time 1</b>	<b>Time 2</b>
Ability	2.86	2.81
Beliefs	2.89	2.80
Leader Behavior	3.00	2.89
Control	2.75	2.83

**TABLE 11: Leader Behavior Mean Comparison**

	<b>Manger Openness</b>		<b>Close Loop</b>		<b>Solicit</b>		<b>Social Monitoring</b>	
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
Ability	3.86	4.03	3.89	3.97	3.78	3.88	3.11	3.17
Beliefs	3.87	3.97	3.86	3.91	3.87	3.87	3.18	3.34
Leader	3.78	3.73	3.71	3.63	3.77	3.56	3.14	3.01
Control	3.88	3.80	3.80	3.62	4.04	3.71	3.19	3.16

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **OVERALL DISCUSSION**

My purpose in conducting this study was to assess how voice changes and through which mechanisms. The results suggest that the strongest effect or largest change in voice behavior occurred by targeting employees' ability to speak up. Across rater groups (employees and managers), the Ability Intervention consistently affected voice behavior post-intervention. The Ability Intervention affects voice behavior by affecting employees' feelings that it is safe and worthwhile to speak up. In contrast, the Employee Beliefs and Leader Behaviors Interventions did not appear to produce significant change, for either the employee or manager raters, in overall voice post-intervention or in employees' feelings of safety, futility, or efficacy.

The consistently significant results for the Ability Intervention and lack thereof for the Beliefs and Leader Behavior Interventions raises several important questions about how and why voice behavior changes. The Ability Intervention was a skill-based intervention that included lessons on managing emotions, issue selling, and giving feedback. This intervention likely had an effect for two reasons. First, the content of the intervention matched the method appropriately; learning skills through behavioral modeling training has a long history of success (Bandura, 1986). From a theoretical standpoint, this intervention targeted employees' motivation and ability to engage in voice, which are the building blocks for behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1990). By developing skills to speak up, employees were able to minimize the feeling that it is risky to engage in voice because they were better able to manage the situation. They also felt that it was worthwhile to speak up because they were more in control of the process. Employees whose motivation and ability are augmented are more likely to manage effectively the voice situations in which they find themselves. Thus, this intervention does not depend on changes in employees'



leaders because it builds skills to deal with a variety of contextual situations and gives them more control over their work context.

In contrast, the Beliefs Intervention likely did not produce changes in voice behavior for methodological or theoretical reasons. Methodologically, the target of this intervention was different from the Ability or Leader Behavior Interventions; it targeted cognitions related to voice. In my design, I ensured that certain aspects of the interventions were consistent to rule out internal validity issues, like: making each session an equal amount of time, providing exercises post-intervention, and using the same amount of lecture and exercises. However, cognitive change may require different methods than behavioral change; it may require additional effort and processing time for change to occur. For example, research on schema changes suggests that once they are formed, they endure and take significant time to change (Taylor and Crocker, 1981).

The Beliefs Intervention also may not have been effective for theoretical reasons. The logic behind this intervention was that in order for employees to speak up more, beliefs about voice need to be directly addressed. The intervention focused on raising awareness of beliefs that are unconsciously applied across situations so that individuals can make more data-driven choices about speaking up. Through this process, individuals were theorized to rely more on contextual cues about speaking up rather than their habituated beliefs. Thus, the fear that is associated with speaking up that is driven by their beliefs should have been reduced. The logic was that as long as, on average, the intervention helped individuals make more data-driven decisions, that a significant effect would be found. However, this was not the case

One reason is that the likelihood that the Beliefs Intervention would produce changes in voice depends on changes in context. Thus, no main effect will be found, but rather contextual

change moderates the effect of this intervention on changes in voice. For example, if an individual holds strong beliefs about speaking up, that it is inappropriate in certain contexts or that negative consequences are likely, and they become aware of these beliefs and then determine to make a more data-driven approach to deciding to speak up, then this individual will start assessing whether or not his or her beliefs are accurate, that is, whether the leader behavior or contextual cues match what his or her beliefs about voice suggest. If the individual finds a match between his or her context and beliefs, then the likelihood of the fear or risk associated with speaking up being reduced is low. Classic behavioral psychology theories, like Skinner's operant conditioning theory supports this logic (1938; 1952). For example, if an individual encounters a form of "punishment", or an unpleasant stimulus, then the likelihood of behavior change is low. In the case of voice, without a change in context, the individual will conclude that there is a match between his or her beliefs and context, which reinforces the belief system and reduces the likelihood that behavior change occurs. For this intervention to create changes in voice behavior, it must be matched with a change in context, or reinforced by positive environmental stimuli. Changing a belief system requires a testing and reflection process, but if individuals conclude that the context is aligned with their beliefs, then the likelihood of trying something different is low. Thus, the efficacy of this intervention depends on changes in context too. As a preliminary test of this, I assessed whether the belief intervention worked under conditions of an open leader. Although this is not a completely accurate test of the theory (because I did not actually change the environment), it would provide preliminary evidence of the contextual conditions under which the Beliefs Intervention might work. Results were not significant when I interacted manager openness and intervention on changes in voice behavior.

Similarly, the efficacy of the Leader Behavior intervention may depend on other factors. This intervention was a skill-based session for leaders on creating opportunities for voice and managing their responses to employees' speaking up with challenging ideas. I argued that this intervention would affect employees' feelings of safety and futility, to the extent that managers created a more open environment and responded positively to instances of voice. The results do not support this hypothesis, likely for theoretical and contextual reasons. Theoretically, if leaders become more open and respond more positively to voice behavior, employees may not respond to these changes because they lack the efficacy to do so or because they hold strong beliefs that it is inappropriate to speak up. Changing context, without directly addressing the individual reasons for silence will be unlikely to result in a main effect change in voice. Since my data suggests that managers were aware of the training content, but did not change their behavior post-intervention (according to employees), it is more likely that the training did not transfer for contextual rather than theoretical reasons.

During the course of this intervention, I spoke with upwards of seventy managers within TechCo. In many of those conversations, I found that middle managers themselves had a strong sense of futility about change within the organization. The following is a representative remark from one manager at the end of an interview: *"There's no point...Even if my employee spoke up, I can't do anything. It's not in my control to change things. It's the higher-ups. They're set in their ways and unwilling to do anything. So what's the point?"* I encountered this sentiment frequently throughout the course of this project. Managers did not feel like they were in control of making changes, which led them to perceive the issues falling higher up within the organization. Managers appeared to understand the content of the intervention based on my manipulation check at the end of the session; however, when I asked employees to remark on

their direct manager's behaviors, including: closing the loop, openness, and social monitoring, both pre- and post-intervention, results show that differences were not significant for the Leader Behavior Intervention. Research on transfer of training suggests that the social environment in which trainees operate has a significant effect on whether or not they transfer their learning on the job (Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001). Thus, the context post-intervention likely played a role in producing changes in behavior that employees would recognize.

In regard to performance outcomes of changing voice behavior, the Ability Intervention affected managers' perceptions of performance in a positive way. The results suggest that employees in the Ability Intervention spoke up more which led managers to rate these employees as better performers. Most likely, employees in this intervention not only spoke up more, but also spoke up better. They were conscious about how to frame their ideas, when to speak up, and were more cognizant of managers' emotions when doing so; thus, the likelihood is that managers found these employees' voices to be more useful which led them to rate these employees' as outstanding employees.

### **Theoretical Implications**

In light of these findings, I return now to the purpose of this study which was to explore the tensions in the voice literature that have emerged as we accumulated knowledge about the antecedents and hindrances to speaking up. These tensions are important because they determine the levers for organizations to pull to create a learning organization by increasing voice behavior. The first tension relates to whether voice is a learned behavior (i.e., a function of skill) or based on habituated cognitive schemas that individuals apply across contexts unconsciously (i.e., IVTs). This tension raises the question of whether individuals are likely to speak up to the extent that they develop skills to do so or whether they will speak up more when they learn to be

mindful of their beliefs that drive voice behavior. My findings suggest voice is most easily changeable by targeting individuals' ability to speak up. This contrasts with early research on voice that suggested that it is primarily a function of personality traits or motivations (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001) and unrelated to cognitive ability (LePine & Van Dyne, 2011), but extends recent research on voice as a "can-do", or skill-based behavior (Grant, 2013).

Additionally, my findings offer insight into the processes through which ability affects voice behavior and potentially why this lever creates the greatest change. I hypothesized that the Ability Intervention would affect efficacy, safety, and futility. Likely the causal path between these mechanisms is such that employees feel more capable of speaking up which reduces their perceptions of risk and increases their belief that it is worthwhile to engage in voice. Surprisingly, the results for efficacy were not significant, despite the logic behind this hypothesis. This finding raises an interesting question for future research about the relationship between efficacy, safety, and futility beliefs about voice.

### **Future Directions**

Given the lack of findings for the Beliefs and Leader Behavior Interventions, the natural next step is to empirically examine the theoretical reasons for the lack of results further. As mentioned previously, the Beliefs Intervention is unlikely to work without positive environmental reinforcement. The leader intervention may be less efficacious without attending to the individual factors that affect voice behavior. Thus, future researchers should consider cross-case comparisons where leaders and their direct employees participate in the interventions.

Similarly, the fact that leaders were aware of the content of the training, but did not transfer their behavior to their work context raises several interesting questions related to leader development. A critical finding in the voice literature suggests that the more open and change-

oriented leaders are, the more likely that their employees will speak up (Detert & Burris, 2007). My findings raise the question of how and whether organizations can create more open leaders. The results here suggest that this is a difficult task. The leadership development literature has primarily focused on individual factors affecting development and more recently on the type of experiences leading to development (DeRue & Wellman, 2009), but the challenges associated with this study imply that the broader context within which leader development takes place needs to be incorporated into our models. Research on the transfer of training shows that the organizational context matters in regard to whether individuals transfer their learning to the job (Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001). Developing leaders to be open is unlikely a matter of showing them behaviors that they need to engage in; if the context in which they work does not allow for them to be open, than skill building and development is unlikely to be effective. Future scholars should explore whether the conditions under which managers can learn to be open, particularly if they can be open if the broader organization that he or she works in does not support the behavior.

### **Limitations**

The execution of this study was wrought with challenges, like most field studies. The organization in which I collected my data was going through a difficult leadership transition, change in strategy, and increased competition in the market for their services. The execution of this study was especially difficult because the project leader within the company announced his exit just prior to my data collection. The politics within the organization made it difficult to leverage the resources needed to conduct the full extent of my proposed study. Additionally, the timeline that I had to follow in order to complete all activities was unexpectedly shortened due to the exit of the project leader. This was also my first time conducting a field experiment, so my

skill level probably also contributed to the challenges I faced. These factors affected one of the most significant limitations of this study, which is sample size. Certainly, I hoped to achieve a higher sample size, particularly at Time 2 from both employees and managers. Mortality is often an issue with longitudinal studies and despite my best efforts, with help from my project partner, the response rates for Time 2 are much lower than hoped. Despite this, I was able to find some effects, but the next iteration of this study should involve a larger sample size. The current sample size limited my ability to test for group-level effects and moderators, which would be interesting follow-up questions to the ones I hypothesized here. The context also affected my ability to examine a broader set of interventions, which was what I had originally hoped to do.

My design also has several limitations that I would improve the next time I conduct a field experiment. First, I should use more robust manipulation checks. I asked participants to rate their level of understanding of the content of the intervention, but a better way to assess this would be through a content test. Additionally, to better tease apart the effects of the interventions, I would have other raters, including peers, rate the behavior of the employees. For example, for the ability intervention, I asked employees the extent to which they engaged in particular voice strategies, but a more valid approach would have been to get peer and supervisor ratings of these behaviors since these are the targets of such actions.

Another limitation of this study was that I was unable to conduct a pilot study of the content of the intervention. I based the content on research findings and had my project partners and a few managers at TechCo review the materials, however, a proper pilot study would have helped me improve the efficacy of the interventions. For example, at the end of the last Leader Behavior Intervention session, I received feedback from a few managers that they felt that the training material was good and useful, but that it should have been an all-day training. Issues like

this would likely have been raised in a proper pilot study. Thus, the efficacy of the interventions, and lack of findings, may be due to the research process that I used.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this research project is to understand how and why voice behavior changes, given its practical import to organizational outcomes like safety, error-reduction, and efficiency (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). In this field experiment, I tested for three different levers to create change in voice behavior. My findings advance our understanding of how and why voice can increase, although as noted here, much work remains to be done.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Survey Items

#### Overall Voice

1. I give suggestions to my manager about how to make this group better, even if others disagree.
2. I give suggestions to my manager about how to make this organization better, even if others disagree.
3. I speak up to my manager with ideas to address employees' needs and concerns.

#### Voice Efficacy

1. I am capable of developing and making recommendations concerning issues that affect this workgroup.
2. I am capable of speaking up and encouraging others in this group to get involved in issues that affect the group.
3. I am capable of communicating my opinions about work issues to others in this group even if my opinion is different and others in the group disagree with me.
4. I am capable of keeping well informed about issues where my opinion might be useful to this work group.
5. I am capable of getting involved in issues that affect the quality of work life here in this group.
6. I am capable of speaking up in this group with ideas for new projects or changes in procedures.

#### Voice Safety

1. I feel safe developing and making recommendations concerning issues that affect this workgroup.
2. I feel safe speaking up and encouraging others in this group to get involved in issues that affect the group.
3. I feel safe communicating my opinions about work issues to others in this group even if my opinion is different and others in the group disagree with me.
4. I feel safe keeping well informed about issues where my opinion might be useful to this work group.
5. I feel safe getting involved in issues that affect the quality of work life here in this group.
6. I feel safe speaking up in this group with ideas for new projects or changes in procedures.

#### Futility

1. It is worthwhile to speak up to my manager.
2. When I speak up to my manager, things get better.
3. When I speak up to my manager, I feel better.
4. It is pointless to speak up to my manager.

## **Implicit Voice Theories**

### **IVT1: Presumed Target Identification**

1. Someone who helps create a process or routine is likely to be offended when others suggest changes.
2. It's risky to challenge existing processes because it may be seen as questioning the wisdom of the individuals who established or support them.
3. Speaking up to suggest a better way of doing something is likely to offend the person(s) currently in charge of the process or product you're speaking about.
4. It is not good to question the way things are done because those who have developed the routines are likely to take it personally.

### **IVT2: Need Solid Data or Solutions**

1. Presenting underdeveloped, under-researched ideas to your group is never a good idea.
2. To look good when speaking up with an idea or suggestion you have to be able to answer every question you get asked.
3. Saying "I don't know" or "I'm not sure" when being questioned about some aspect of a new idea you're presenting puts you in a bad position.
4. Unless you have clear solutions, you shouldn't speak up about problems.

### **IVT3: Don't Bypass the Boss Upward**

1. When you speak up about problems or areas for improvement to your boss in front of people who are even higher in the organization, you make your boss look bad.
2. Loyalty to your boss means you don't speak up about problems in front of his or her boss.
3. Pointing out possibilities for improvement in front of other managers calls attention to the fact that my boss didn't identify these possibilities him/herself.
4. Questions that you're not sure if your boss can answer should not be asked in front of your boss's boss.

### **IVT4: Don't Embarrass the Boss Downward**

1. Pointing out problems or inefficiencies in front of others is likely to embarrass the boss.
2. It is not a good idea to make your manager look bad in front of the group by speaking up without telling him/her in advance.
3. You should always pass your ideas by the boss in private first, before you speak up publicly at work.
4. It is important to give your boss time to prepare to discuss a problem or suggestion you have prior to bringing it up in front of a group.

### **IVT5: Career Consequences of Voice**

1. If you want advancement opportunities in today's world, you have to be careful about pointing out needs for improvement to those in charge.
2. You are more likely to be rewarded in organizational life by "going along quietly" than by speaking up about ways the organization can improve.
3. Pointing out problems, errors, or inefficiencies might very well result in lowered job evaluations.
4. Speaking up at work about possible improvements sets you up for retribution by those above you



who felt threatened by your comments.

### **Manager Openness**

1. My manager has invited and listened to my suggestions on work-related changes.
2. My manager has invited and listened to my suggestions on work proposals under consideration.
3. My manager has invited and listened to my suggestions on any work-related plans.
4. My manager listens to my ideas.
5. My manager is interested in my ideas.
6. My manager gives fair consideration to the ideas I present.
7. My manager at least sometimes takes action to address the matters I raise.

### **Promotive Voice**

1. I proactively develop and make suggestions for issues that may influence the unit.
2. I proactively suggest new projects which are beneficial to the work unit.
3. I raise suggestions to improve the unit's working procedure.
4. I proactively voice out constructive suggestions that help the unit reach its goals.
5. I make constructive suggestions to improve the unit's operation.

### **Prohibitive Voice**

1. I advise other colleagues against undesirable behaviors that would hamper job performance.
2. I speak up honestly with problems that might cause serious loss to the work unit, even when/though dissenting opinions exist.
3. I dare to voice out opinions on things that might affect efficiency in the work unit, even if that would embarrass others.
4. I dare to point out problems when they appear in the unit, even if that would hamper relationships with other colleagues.
5. I proactively report coordination problems in the workplace to the management.

### **Employee Performance**

1. All things considered, this employee is one of my best employees.
2. All things considered, this employee is outstanding at his/her job.
3. All things considered, this employee exceeds all of my expectations for an employee in this group.
4. This employee likelihood for promotion is excellent.

## APPENDIX B:

### EMPLOYEE ABILITY INTERVENTION DETAILS

#### Exercise #1

##### Part A

Think about a time when you spoke up to your manager with an idea for an improvement or a work-related issue *that was successful*.

What was the topic (generally):

What was the process that you went through to speak up to your boss?

Why do you think you were successful?

##### Part B

Think about a time when you spoke up to your manager with an idea for an improvement or a work-related issue *that was NOT successful*.

What was the topic (generally):

What was the process that you went through to speak up to your boss?

Why do you think you were successful?

#### Exercise #2:

##### Scenario #1

**Context:** Ravi has been at Infosys for 1.5 years and in that time has been on two projects. His current project is for a large US-based financial services company. He works on a team of about 20 developers. For the last year, Ravi has worked under Vinod. Although Ravi has known Vinod for a year, Ravi doesn't feel very close to Vinod. They interact only when needed and Vinod always seems busy when Ravi thinks about speaking to him. Vinod has favorites among the group, and Ravi does not feel like he is one of them. But Ravi is close, at least at work, with the people who Vinod seems closest to. Vinod seems to like the people who stay the latest and purposefully display that they are working harder than others. In addition, Vinod likes the people who are from the same area as he is- which is Karnataka. Ravi is from Punjab, so doesn't speak the local language. Vinod and Ravi speak in English, although Vinod speaks his local language with his 'favorites'.

Sometimes Vinod is hard to read. During group meetings, sometimes he seems annoyed and raises his voice in anger. Other times, he is quite happy and cheerful. When someone says something he doesn't like, Vinod crosses his arms and focuses his eyes a bit to a glare. He can quickly shut down someone's suggestion or idea in a group meeting. Only the 'favorites' seem to be able to say anything in those meetings to good effect.

Vinod is very focused on efficiency and quality as of late. The company results have been rather dismal and Vinod has made it very clear that Ravi and his teammates need to step up their work. He doesn't want to see any errors or unmet goals in the next quarter. Ravi and his teammates feel a lot of pressure to perform.

Ravi has realized recently that his workgroup's workflow is inefficient. He has caught a few errors recently in his own work that he feels have been the result of a larger systemic problem. The problem is, the workflow process was created by Vinod six months ago. Given that the idea is Vinod's and his personality and the current organizational context, Ravi is afraid to say anything for fear of being wrong, wasting Vinod's time, or offending him.

**Communication Process:** Given this scenario, how should Ravi approach Vinod to speak up about the issue that Ravi believes is important. How would you do it? Which TACTICS would you use? How would you manage the emotions of the situation?

## Scenario #2

**Context:** Rohini has been at Infosys for 2 years. During that time, she's been on the same client project, a large British based utility company, with the same manager, Mohan. She and her manager are close. So close that others think Rohini is Mohan's favorite. Rohini feels uncomfortable with this fact, so she tries to minimize interaction with Mohan when others are around.

Things have been very stressful on this client project in the last six months or so. The European economy has affected Infosys' relationships with many of its European clients, including the client that Rohini works on. Recently, the client asked all of the project managers to reduce the overhead cost of the projects, which included eliminating any aspects that were not producing quality results or were inefficient. Rohini and her teammates feel a lot of pressure to not slip up at all.

Well, all of her teammates except for one. A particular employee on Rohini's project team consistently makes errors that affect the rest of the team. Additionally, this person is a nightmare to work with: constantly creating bad energy by talking about Infosys and the client negatively. In addition, he makes fun of Mohan and other people on the team behind their backs. Rohini feels that this particular person is affecting the workgroup climate, bringing down everyone's morale, as well as affecting their performance. Rohini knows other people agreed with her about the 'problem employee', but she isn't sure what to do.

**Communication Process:** Explain how you would go about approaching the manager to speak up about the issue that Rohini believes is important. How would you do it? Which TACTICS would you use? How would you manage the emotions of the situation?

### Exercise #3

**Issue:**

<u>T</u> ailored to the target	
<u>A</u> ctivating appropriate affect	
<u>C</u> onsciously framed	
<u>T</u> imed right	
<u>I</u> nvolving interested others	
<u>C</u> onsiderate of context	
<u>S</u> uggesting a sensible solution	
What is your emotion strategy?	

## APPENDIX C:

### EMPLOYEE BELIEFS INTERVENTION DETAILS

Exercise #1:

#### Scenario #1:

Ravi works in a unit of 20 people. He's worked in the unit for a little over a year and has a good relationship with his boss. He recently realized that one of their work processes was inefficient and came up with a better way to handle it. The work process that Ravi thought could be improved was initiated by his boss before Ravi joined the group. Ravi told his boss that the work process that he created was inefficient.

Rate the likelihood that you would speak up in this situation:

1 (very unlikely)	2 (unlikely)	3 (likely)	4 (very likely)
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#### Scenario #2:

Ravi works in a unit of 20 people. He's worked in the unit for a little over a year and has a good relationship with his boss. He recently realized that one of their work processes was inefficient and came up with a better way to handle it. One of the other developers created the process a few years back. Ravi told his boss that he thought there was a better way to do the particular process.

Rate the likelihood that you would act in the same way that Ravi did:

1 (very unlikely)	2 (unlikely)	3 (likely)	4 (very likely)
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#### Scenario #3:

Manoj works in a unit of 30 people who frequently have conference calls with the entire team located across different locations. In one particular group meeting, Manoj's manager's boss was asking for feedback on improving the efficiency of how they served the client. Manoj decided to raise his hand and make a suggestion, even though he had not discussed the suggestion with his manager first.

Rate the likelihood that you would act in the same way that Manoj did:

1 (very unlikely)	2 (unlikely)	3 (likely)	4 (very likely)
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#### Scenario #4:

Manoj works in a unit of 30 people who frequently have conference calls with the entire team located across different locations. In one particular group meeting, Manoj's manager's boss was asking for feedback on improving the efficiency of how they served the client. Manoj thought about raising his hand to make a suggestion, but decided he should wait and talk to his direct manager about it first.

Rate the likelihood that you would act in the same way that Manoj did:

1 (very unlikely)	2 (unlikely)	3 (likely)	4 (very likely)
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**Scenario #5:**

Aruna works in a group of 25 people. One day, she made an error in her work, but realized that it wasn't her fault. She looked into the issue more and found that her team's work process was leading to a lot of errors. She asked other folks if they were having the same issue and found that they were too. Prior to telling her boss about this issue, she made notes about how many others had this issue and how frequently. When she spoke to her boss, she made sure to cite how many others had the same issue and provided a possible solution.

Rate the likelihood that you would act in the same way that Aruna did:

1 (very unlikely)	2 (unlikely)	3 (likely)	4 (very likely)
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**Scenario #6:**

Aruna works in a group of 25 people. One day, she made an error in her work, but realized that it wasn't her fault. She looked into the issue more and found that her team's work process was leading to a lot of errors. She immediately went to her boss and informed him that she thought something was wrong with the work process.

Rate the likelihood that you would act in the same way that Aruna did:

1 (very unlikely)	2 (unlikely)	3 (likely)	4 (very likely)
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**Exercise #2:**

**Scenario #1:** Syed works on a team of 20 developers. His boss holds weekly meetings to discuss the current project, including any issues that anyone is having related to work. In these meetings, Syed's boss always asks for feedback from him and his teammates. Rarely does anyone give any suggestions. One time, when another teammate, Anand, gave a suggestion, the manager was very happy about it and thanked Anand for raising a suggestion for making their work process more efficient. Despite this one example, Syed still does not speak up in these group meetings.

**Context:**

**What should Syed have done?**

**Scenario #2:** Vindya works on a team of 30 people. One time in a group meeting, Vindya's coworker suggested a change in one of the team's work processes in front of all of the other teammates. Their boss, Ajay, became visibly angry with Vindya and shut down her idea almost immediately. From then on, Vindya never thought to speak up in a group meeting with other teammates.

**Context:**

**What should Vindya have done?**

**Scenario #3:** Abhi works on a team of 25 other developers. In group meetings, his boss, Prakash, responds positively whenever someone else suggests a change or raises an issue. Abhi has even heard others say that in one-on-one meetings, their boss likes hearing ideas for improvement. In group meetings with their skip-level boss, Prakash openly asks people to make suggestions. Despite the positive reactions from Prakash, Abhi still does not raise ideas for suggestions in either private or public meetings.

**Context:**

**What should Abhi have done?**

**Exercise #3:**

<b>Belief</b>	<b>Boss' Behavior</b>	<b>Past or Current Context?</b>	<b>Test it!</b>
1. Don't question the boss' ideas or procedures because he/she will be offended.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Yes or No?</b> My boss gets upset when people point out problems with work routines that s/he has spent time developing or supporting.</li></ul>	
2. I need solid data or solutions before I speak up.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Yes or No?</b> People in my unit are told not to bring up problems unless they can present clear solutions.</li></ul>	
3. Don't bypass the boss upward (don't speak up to your boss' boss in front of anyone).		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Yes or No?</b> My boss uses words and actions indicating that pointing out things needing improvement to those higher in the organization is a sign</li></ul>	

		of disloyalty to her/him.	
4. Don't speak up in front of your workgroup without discussing the topic earlier with your boss.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Yes or No?</b> My boss uses words and actions indicating that pointing out things in front of others without first discussing with him/her is not allowed.</li> </ul>	
5. Speaking up will have negative career consequences.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Yes or No?</b> I have seen people in my unit incur negative consequences after speaking up.</li> </ul>	

**Exercise #4:**

Think about the what, to whom, where, and when of speaking up (or anything else that comes to mind about speaking up) to managers in work organizations, please state below—in your own words—any beliefs you have about what, in general, *makes speaking up to those with more power feel somewhat or very risky, dangerous, or inappropriate.*

**The What?**

**To Whom?**

**The Where?**

**The When?**

**Leader Behavior**



**APPENDIX D:**

**LEADER BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION DETAILS**

**Exercise: Your Employees**

<b>Employee Name</b>	<b>High or Low Voice?</b>	<b>Reason for Silence or How you would prefer them to speak up</b>

**Exercise: Your employees and your behavior**

<b>Employee Name</b>	<b>Are you Open?</b>	<b>Have you Consulted for ideas?</b>	<b>How is your verbal/body language toward this employee?</b>

**Exercise: Body and Verbal Language**

<b>Behavior</b>	<b>Self Perception</b>
<b>Body Language</b>	
<b>Verbal Language</b>	

**Exercise: Ability and Motivation to Make Changes**

<b>Ability and Motivation</b>	<b>Self Perception</b>
<b>Access to Organizational Resources</b>	
<b>Participation in Decision Making</b>	
<b>Change Orientation</b>	

**Exercise: What will you do differently?**

<b>Employee Name</b>	<b>High or Low Voice? If Low, Reason for silence</b>	<b>Your Behavior Previously</b>	<b>What Can You Do Differently?</b>

**Exercise: Speaking Up to YOUR Boss**

<b>Tactic</b>	<b>Your Behavior</b>
<u>T</u> ailored to the target	
<u>A</u> ctivating appropriate affect	
<u>C</u> onsciously framed	
<u>T</u> imed right	
<u>I</u> nvolving interested others	
<u>C</u> onsiderate of context	
<u>S</u> uggesting a sensible solution	
Emotion Strategy	